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JAN 27 1932

The New Statesman and Nation, January 16, 1932

An End of Reparations

THE NEW
STATESMAN AND NATION

Incorporating *The Athenæum*

Vol. III. No. 47 (New Series) SATURDAY, JANUARY 16, 1932 [Registered at the G.P.O. as a newspaper] SIXPENCE

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THE Lausanne Conference will not be an economic conference but a political one. For reparations were born not of economic calculation but of political nationalism, and they must die when at length the economic realities are too strong for the politicians. To-day, since the publication of the Basle report, there is no longer any dispute about the economic facts. The French are just as much aware as we are that Germany cannot pay anything now and that it is economically suicidal to go on haggling about possible threepenny bits some indefinite number of years hence. The question, therefore, is political and psychological—whether politicians, who have talked nonsense in public so long, can suddenly begin to talk sense. Close at hand are the French and Prussian elections. Even closer at hand is the consciousness, everywhere on the continent, of imminent economic chaos.

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In such a situation England may play a really big and useful part. We should like to see Mr. MacDonald himself go to Lausanne. He is at his best in international conferences; he has great experience and a flair for broad issues. And it is the broad issues which alone are relevant at Lausanne. The fatal thing would be to make common cause with the French, to confront Germany with an offer of a new moratorium of two or five years with the prospect of another committee and more haggling at the end of it. Everyone knows that reparations are really at an end and that the only object in accepting the French proposals would be to retain the French political stranglehold over Germany. And it is certain that no German Chancellor, whatever his party, could give his assent to any proposal which would involve a German pledge to pay reparations in the future. Germany is repudiationist to a man, woman and child. If it proves impossible simply to wipe out reparations at a stroke, the only sane alternative is that urged in our columns by Mr. Keynes—to put off the settlement for a few months until the elections in France and Prussia are over. If in the meantime there is a swing to the left in France and if—an immensely important possibility—the Disarmament Conference gives Germany any belief in the sincerity of her neighbours we may see in a few months' time a clean sweep of the whole reparation muddle and the dawn of a situation in which economic recovery is possible in Europe.

* * *

The sudden resignation of M. Laval means little, apart from the disappearance of M. Briand. We must not expect any immediate change in French policy. It was merely one of those transformation scenes which take place in French politics: the actors disappear from the stage only to return immediately in different costume. On this occasion comparatively few of them have even changed their

ministerial clothes. M. Laval and M. Flandin are still there as before; M. Tardieu is still there, but in the appropriate costume of a Minister of War. But beneath the surface France is changing. Two to three millions of unemployed is a new experience in France, and French nationalism, which has always been realistic, must be modified accordingly. As Commander King-Hall says in his pamphlet *Britain's Chance*: "In this respect we have been more cowardly than the French; we have not been prepared to nail our colours so firmly to the mast of internationalism as the French have been ready to nail theirs to nationalism." If Mr. MacDonald stands firmly for internationalism, we may not now find the French intransigent.

* * *

Dr. Brüning's political crisis is proving far more troublesome that M. Laval's. A week or so ago Herr Hitler was hobnobbing with the Chancellor, and there were hopes of getting his agreement to the prolongation of President Hindenburg's term of office. But he had misgivings, it is said, about the method proposed, which would involve a tampering with the Constitution, and these misgivings were doubtless strengthened by the hostility shown to the scheme by Herr Hugenburg. And now Herr Frick, the Nazi leader in the Reichstag, has made a truculent speech, in which, according to the reports, he demanded the resignation of Dr. Brüning, and declared the Nazis would not support President Hindenburg if he stood again at a national election. Various interpretations are put on this by German commentators. Some assert that Herr Frick was only speaking for himself. Others talk of a serious split in the Nazi ranks. Others again believe that the speech was a tactical manœuvre to which Herr Hitler was privy. The whole situation at the moment is certainly obscure. But it is fairly clear that Herr Hitler is in a delicate position. There are advantages in an accommodation with Dr. Brüning, for the President is not only his supporter but is very popular. On the other hand there is the risk of over-strengthening the Chancellor. And the Hugenburg Nationalists on the flank have to be watched.

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Europe is at a standstill until Lausanne. The bankers assembled at Berlin are marking time, since the Bank for International Settlements cannot promise to renew its credits to Germany unless all the Central Banks which collaborated with it in making previous advances agree to renew them, and one of these, the Bank of France, will promise nothing. The one bold pronouncement has come from the semi-official *Popolo d'Italia*, which has published an article, assumed to have been written by, or at least directly inspired by, Mussolini himself. The article urges all-round cancellation of reparations and war-debts and is particularly addressed to the United States—"the one State that owes nothing to anybody." It argues that France, Italy and Great Britain will have a "clear conscience" in asking the United States to forgive them their debts, when they themselves have forgiven their debtors. If Great Britain takes a bold course at Lausanne, she shall at least have one powerful ally on the side of sanity.

* * *

The United States Government was moved last week to address a Note to Japan and China on the situation in Manchuria. It was an announcement that America would not recognise any action or arrangement that violated the "open door" policy as laid down in the Nine-Power Treaty of 1922, and a pretty plain suggestion that Japan, in the eyes of Washington, was preparing to close the door. The Note appears to have caused more annoyance than alarm in Tokio, for the Japanese do not suppose, any more than does anybody else, that the United States is threatening war. Nor do other signatories of the Nine-Power Treaty seem disposed to follow the American example. The British Government have explained that, of course, they stand by the "open door," but are satisfied with the assurances of the Japanese that they intend to keep it open. For our own part, we are not quite so sure, though we shall continue to hope—if only because there is nothing else to be done now that Japan has been allowed to defy covenants and pacts. It is possible, however, that Mr. Stimson's Note, though it may fall flat now, will prove a useful reminder, when the Japanese have finished their somewhat lengthy "mopping up" operations in Manchuria.

* * *

The work of the Burma Round Table Conference came to an end on Tuesday, when Mr. MacDonald announced the proposals of the British Government. The Burmans may separate from India if they wish; that will be decided at their general election next November. If the vote goes in favour of separation, as it is expected to, Burma is offered responsible government with "safeguards," more or less after the pattern proposed for India. But the safeguards appear formidable to any ardent Home Ruler. The army, foreign affairs, the general direction of monetary policy, the right of veto on legislative measures, and the administration of the Shan States and other "excluded areas", are all to be retained in the Governor's hands. Provision must also be made for the protection and representation of minorities, and on this point there may be a good deal of difficulty, for the Burman majority, like the Hindu majority in India, have their own views about the treatment of the "stranger within their gates." The new Constitution, when its details have been hammered out, will evidently not give complete satisfaction in Burma. But it may be accepted as a half-way house to the freedom which the Burmans want, and which we have promised they shall have in the fullness of time.

* * *

The Government has now appointed the Indian members of the Committees set up to continue the work of the Round Table Conference in India, and we are about to witness a most interesting experiment. It is generally assumed in the Conservative press in this country that it will prove possible to work out a scheme of self-government in India while the whole of the Congress Party is under a ban and most of its leaders in prison. The experiment will at least have the advantage of testing the strength of Congress and of showing whether moderate Indian opinion still retains enough confidence in the honesty of British professions to make any effective co-operation possible. There are certainly many people in this country who believe the combination of the policy of the "firm hand" with

that of "goodwill and co-operation" to be impossible. The Commonwealth of India League has published a moderately phrased statement which argues that "repression will stimulate the small and irresponsible terrorist elements in India to further violence," "divert public opinion from concentration upon the main problem of self-government," and "further undermine the faith of all sections of Indians in the genuineness of British declarations in favour of self-government." This manifesto is widely signed by ex-Cabinet Ministers and members of Parliament, professors and Trade Unionists.

* * *

It is confidently reported that the Cabinet Committee which has been dealing with tariff policy has reached an agreement on the basis of a general tariff on manufactured goods, but not on foodstuffs or raw materials; and it is said that not only Mr. Runciman and Sir John Simon, but even Lord Snowden, that fanatical free-trader, is a consenting party to this proposal. It would be some comfort to know that the Cabinet meant to go no farther than this, and that we were, at any rate, safe from more taxes on food. But a great deal turns on the meaning of the labels "manufactured goods" and "raw materials." According to the trade returns, all iron and steel, from pig-iron to finished goods, is in the category of manufactured goods; and so is petrol, together with a host of semi-manufactures that are the materials of British industries! It is true that, with all these included, imported manufactures represented in 1931 only £262,000,000 out of an imports total of £862,000,000. But £262,000,000 is a good big lump to tax, if it is really proposed to tax it all. Moreover, we do not know yet whether the proposed tariff is to be high or low, broadly at a flat rate or varied for each class of goods, or how it is to be administered. But these are all vital matters—no less vital than the range of goods on which taxes are to be laid. Liberals are beginning to ask at what point the elasticity of Sir Herbert Samuel's free-trade views will give out.

* * *

The scheme for a Wheat Quota has emerged from the Government's recent discussions with the millers and other groups interested in the grain trade in yet another form. There is to be an unpaid Wheat Commission in place of the proposed National Board; and the Commission is to be not a trading but only a regulating body. There is not to be a tax on imported wheat or flour, as the millers proposed; but there is to be a guaranteed price to the wheat growers, and a quota which may even be raised above the six million quarters of the previous Government scheme. Wheat growers, millers and merchants will have to register, and quota certificates will be sold at prices calculated to cover the cost of the subsidy to the farmers. The subsidy will thus be paid not by the State, but by the millers and, ultimately, by the consumers. The new scheme seems to embody all the disadvantages of the old one, without most of its advantages, which have been eliminated presumably on account of their socialistic tendency. But, as all the interests have apparently promised to work the scheme in its revised form, it will presumably go through, and the country embark on a definite subsidy to wheat-growing. The agricultural interests are understood to be pressing for a bigger quota, which would, of course, mean more for the consumer to pay. And there is the Dominion quota still looming ahead. Meanwhile, the reforms of agriculture which do offer hope of real economic expansion in Great Britain are still whistling for the wind.

* * *

The Government's housing policy is at length made fairly plain by a circular issued this week by the Minister of Health. Local authorities are urged to concentrate at present almost exclusively on building small cheap houses of the non-parlour type, to be let at 10s. a week or less; and the policy of averaging rents to cover the costs of houses built at different dates and price-levels is to be discarded in order to bring the rents for the new houses down to this figure. In present circumstances there is certainly much to be said for building small houses and letting them cheap. The dubious aspect of the new policy is the proposal to cut out as far as possible the building of larger houses, even when the demand for them plainly exists. They are to be sanctioned, we are told, only in exceptional circumstances, and the object is to leave this part of the field almost entirely to private enterprise. But will private enterprise provide houses to rent, or only to buy; and will it, except in Greater London perhaps, provide them in the required numbers or where they are wanted? Unless the Ministry of Health is prepared to endorse a good many more "exceptions" than its circular suggests, there is likely to be a serious decline in building in many parts of the country.

* * *

There is little pleasure to be extracted from the trade returns for 1931, which were issued the other day. The excess of net imports over exports of British goods is up by £23,000,000 on 1930, and by £27,000,000 on 1929. If this were all, the position would not be very serious; but of course the margin is very much larger in terms of goods, owing to the sharp fall in prices. Moreover, the excess of our exports over imports of manufactured goods alone has fallen from £269,000,000 in 1929 and £157,000,000 in 1930 to only £46,000,000 in 1931. The value of imported raw materials is less than half what it was in 1929, and of manufactures not quite a fifth less, while for imported foodstuffs the fall is rather more than one-fifth. British exports are down from £729,000,000 in 1929 to £389,000,000 in 1931, despite the influence of sterling depreciation in the last quarter of the year. The Board of Trade estimates for the "invisible" imports and exports are not yet out; but it is known that our income from overseas investments and shipping has fallen very sharply, and that those items will affect the total balance of payments much more adversely than the fall in the "visible" balance of trade. There will certainly be a deficit, probably of more than £50,000,000 on the final balance, apart from short-term capital movements. Protectionists will doubtless use the figures in order to press further their case for an all-round tariff. But will a tariff do us any good? It will certainly not help us to get more income from shipping and overseas investments, which are the chief factors in our adverse balance.

CAN WE AFFORD THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS?

THE League of Nations celebrates its twelfth birthday this week. There have been no junketings or presentations of bouquets at Geneva to mark the occasion; the times are too grim and tempers too strained. The best friends of the League have been sadly disappointed by its handling of the Manchurian affair in the last few months, and the hopes with which they look forward to the Disarmament Conference are mingled with anxiety. But that does not mean that the League is to be written down a failure. It is still handicapped by the fact that America and Russia are not included among its fifty-five members; it has bungled more than one of its tasks. But it has in the twelve years of its existence prevented wars and settled serious disputes. It has struggled to lay the foundations of peace, and it has achieved much of solid value. It has provided an arena where the contest between nationalism and internationalism can be fought out in public. It stands in a crazy world for the spirit of sanity. If there were no League of Nations to-day, we should have to invent one—or crash.

There is a school of thought (if "thought" is not too flattering a word!) which jeers at all this. The League, we are told, is a white elephant, or an "extravagant farce," and the British taxpayer is adjured to make an end of it. Hair-raising figures of its expense are conjured up. The British Empire, we read in one of our popular newspapers, contributes more than 26 per cent. of the annual budget of the League, so that the "farce" costs us £350,000 a year, or nearly £1,000 a day. The basis of these calculations is not very clear. The League budget for 1931–32 is actually in round figures 33½ million gold francs. Of this the British Empire—excluding the Dominions and India, which are separate members of the League, with votes of their own at Geneva and as independent of Great Britain as they choose to be—pays ten per cent. That, with the pound at its present exchange value, would mean something under £200,000, or about £540 a day. We notice that those who are staggered by this sum make no mention of the price we pay for our armaments—which works out at nearly £200 a minute. They do not even let their readers into the secret—the quite open secret—of the expense of a single battleship. The annual upkeep of H.M.S. *Nelson* costs £430,000, or £1,178 a day. And does the taxpayer really get more than twice as much value for his money from the battleship as he does from the League of Nations? Does he indeed get any value at all from it? Are not battleships in fact the veritable white elephants of the modern world? And is not expenditure on insuring against war a truer economy than expenditure on preparing for war?

That question brings us back to the function and the meaning of the League. The League represents first and foremost a concerted effort to substitute peace for war, to settle disputes between nations by agreement and by law instead of by violence. It is a hard task and it may be a long one; you cannot in the space of a few years purge men of all their pugnacity, their jealousies, their greeds and their fears. But despite the difficulties (amongst which must be reckoned the politicians and journalists who exalt pugnacity and greed and fear to the rank of virtues), some progress has been made. The Permanent Court of International Justice, recognised by thirty-seven States, the General Act, and other undertakings to substitute arbitration for force—these are not mere humbug. They constitute the machinery of peace, and their acceptance, even if it is reluctant or hedged about with reservations, by half the world, does at least mark a stage on the road of common sense. A great Power can doubtless find pretexts for repudiating its pledges, as Japan has done. But it has yet to be shown that any Power, great or small, either desires or is able to destroy the whole framework of pacific settlement that is being built up. Even the Japanese and those who have supported them deny that they have broken faith with the League. And for ourselves, however hypocritical we think that denial and however feeble the conduct of M. Briand and his colleagues, we believe that but for the existence of the League worse things would have happened in the Far East. But for the existence of the League—the dread, the hopes, and the aspirations that gave it birth and have kept it alive—not only Asia but Europe would have been in ruins. It is twaddle to talk as though the British Empire could shut itself up inside its own walls and live happily by cultivating its own garden. It is worse than twaddle to suggest that we should abandon the League because we cannot afford to pay the subscription, or because we do not like the policy of France. We shall not alter the policy of France, except for the worse, by cutting ourselves loose from the League, and we dare not in any case cut ourselves loose from the League. The League, with all its obvious imperfections, stands for peace, which is the supreme interest, the supreme necessity indeed, of the British Empire. And it stands also for economy; every schoolboy knows that the most monstrous of all extravagances is war and the preparation for war. Let the angry scribe, who asks us to save "£1,000 a day" by shaking the dust of Geneva off our feet, recall what Lord Snowden said some little time back, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer—that reckoning together armaments, debts and pensions, Great Britain was paying "£1,000 a minute to provide for war purposes."

But surely, it may be objected, the League, weak and distracted as it is, does not offer any absolute guarantee against war. Of course it does not. But it offers the best guarantee we can get at present. What other means have we of preventing or settling armed quarrels, of developing the machinery of arbitration, of promoting the co-operation of Governments and the friendly intercourse of peoples? And the hesitations and the resistances of States which are obsessed by fear or aggressive designs will certainly not be overcome by disintegrating the League. Disarmament will not make much advance if it is to depend on private exchanges between the Foreign Offices and War Offices of this country and that. It is clear that, if the burden of armaments is to be reduced, it must be done by general consent and after full and public discussion. The Conference over which Mr. Henderson will preside next month will ensure discussion, will force every State to put its cards on the table and to justify its

policies. Whether we shall agree to save many of the millions that we are all squandering on engines of destruction remains to be seen; the omens are not too auspicious. But one thing at least is certain. If this Conference proves a failure, we must try again. For what we cannot afford is not the travelling expenses of a few delegates to international meetings and the salaries of a few officials at Geneva. It is the maintenance of huge fleets and armies to drain our pockets in peace time and the production of hideous chemicals to poison and choke whole populations in war.

AN END OF REPARATIONS?

GERMANY to-day is in the grip of the most terrible deflation that any nation has experienced. A visitor to that country is offered an extraordinary example of what the effects of such a policy can be, carried out *à outrance*. Indeed, the position is worse than a mere deflation need create. For a deflation might generally be expected to lower costs relatively to foreign costs and thereby assist exports. But in this case it is combined with a strangling exchange control which, by maintaining the mark at a fancy figure (Mks. 14½ to the £) in relation to the currencies of the non-gold countries, has simultaneously *raised* the relative cost of German goods in foreign markets and is thus destroying her trade. The result reaches, or goes beyond, the limit of what is endurable. Nearly a third of the population is out of work. The standards of life of those still employed have been cruelly curtailed. There is scarcely a manufacturer or a merchant in the country who is not suffering pecuniary losses which must soon bring his business to a standstill. The export trades, until recently so flourishing, are rapidly losing their foreign orders. Parents see no careers or openings for their offspring. The growing generation is without the normal incentives of bourgeois security and comfort. Too many people in Germany have nothing to look forward to—nothing except a "change," something wholly vague and wholly undefined, but a *change*. And it is now more than seventeen years since the outbreak of war.

Hamburg, living in a stupor, many miles of ships laid up silent in its harbour, with the elaborate traffic control of a great city but no traffic to be seen, is a symbol of Germany under the Great Deflation—a worse visitation, if it is to be continued, than even the Great Inflation was a few years ago. Germany to-day, still spick and span as ever, is like a beautiful machine at a standstill, ready to spring to life at the press of a button, but meanwhile inanimate. But while the machine sleeps, its crew cannot sleep.

We need to have an imaginative apprehension of all this. The reparations problem has become a matter of human feelings, of deep popular gusts of passion, and, consequently, of very simple reactions and decisions. It is high time for the "experts" to leave the room. If they have ever contributed anything, they have nothing further to contribute. It is a moment for the statesmen of the world to handle the matters which they are supposed to understand, namely, to record in set terms the unreflecting but absolute decisions of the common mind.

For although it is scientifically true that the situation thus delineated was created by a complex of events of which reparations and war debts have been only one, the common man cannot be expected to see it this way. If he is to think and feel about it at all, as to-day he must, he has to simplify it. And if he is determined on a "change," he can only demand what is concrete and appears to him to be within his mere power to effect.

Has not, then, the time come to invoke the power of simple ideas which all can understand? It is not worth while to send the "experts" into closets to calculate whether there may not be conceivable circumstances in which someone could pay sixpence some day. I am sure that it is the will of the British people, felt to-day with a rare force and unanimity, that the Government of this country should stand, openly and with determination, for the total cancellation of reparations and war debts. We should not be disturbed by the fact that this country has in the main already made its own contribution of generosity to the appeasement of the world, and that the paper sacrifices now asked for (for that is all they are) are mostly from others; though if there is anything further which can be justly asked of us, we should concede it. The country wants the Prime Minister to take up a stand beside Italy in support of Dr. Brüning's appeal.

This should be our declared policy. But it need not be incompatible with a respect for the diplomatic difficulties and for the difference of pace with which the public sentiments of the countries concerned are moving. It is rumoured in the press that our Treasury has been discussing with the French a project of a moratorium of two or three years and some sort of another Dawes Committee at the end of it. The City views this expedient with hostility and alarm; and I believe that the City, for once, is right. In any event, it would be impossible for the German Chancellor, in the face of the present vehemence of opinion in his own country, even to discuss it. If this policy were to be pressed, it could only end in a total repudiation by Germany of all future liability. We must set our faces invincibly towards a final settlement within the present year.

Nevertheless, there would be immense advantages to the world in an agreed settlement, over against a forced, universal default. It is worth while to exercise the utmost patience and all the arts and usages of conciliation and political wisdom. It would even be worth while, in spite of what I have just said about the sixpences, for Germany to agree, and for us to urge Germany to agree, to pay modest and reasonable sums hereafter, if it was clear that this would make a settlement possible. For what may be conceded for the sake of peace is not the same thing as our own preferred policy.

But this does not mean that the position is ripe for a final settlement at Lausanne this month or next. There are several reasons why this is almost certainly impossible. Europe is seething with pure politics, and so is America. In this country all is plain for the time being. But abroad the political kaleidoscope is such as to make any observer dizzy. In particular, with elections both in France and in Prussia only a few weeks off, we may be sure that the statesmen of neither country can make to-day those concessions which they may feel in their hearts to be wise and may have the authority to put over a few months hence. Moreover, opinion all over the world is advancing with seven-league boots. But it is not equally advanced everywhere. Time and the silent pressure of events are still doing good work and should not yet be interrupted.

It happens that a short adjournment is singularly easy without raising any fundamental problems. Under the Hoover moratorium Germany is due to commence making payments on July 15 next, but the war debt payments to America do not recommence until December 15. Thus it is possible to extend the moratorium to Germany by five months without bringing to a head our own position *vis-à-vis* America. The decisions to be taken at Lausanne might, therefore, take the form (1) of a promise from the Allies to make to Germany within the present year a precise and definite proposal for the final determination of her liabilities, together with any further concessions which they are able to offer to make her task easier and more palatable, and to bring the war atmosphere to an end with a shake of the hand and a sincere offer of friendship; (2) of an agreement to watch the development of the economic crisis for a

further six months before making this offer; and (3) with these objects in view, of an extension of Germany's moratorium to December 15 and an adjournment of the Conference for six months. J. M. KEYNES.

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A LONDON DIARY

A friend of mine who spends much of his time in France has just returned with a striking account of the change of feeling there. France is now really conscious of the depression. The *Confédération Générale du Travail* now reckons that there are three million unemployed in France, and the official figure is over two millions. And France is like the United States in having no "dole." The unemployed live on charity and on local relief: they stand about at street corners instead of being marshalled in orderly array as they are in Germany. In France they talk. What is to spring from such talk? My friend remarks that he would not be surprised if the revolution, which every one discusses in Europe, began in France. This is certainly a novel idea, but to the historically minded not an absurd one. 1830 and 1848 both began suddenly, almost inexplicably, out of street-corner conversation. Your German workman is patient and may be a Marxist; your French workman is not patient, and when out of work is liable to do something about it. But however that may be, I find a general expectation now of a big swing to the left in the French elections.

* * *

Another friend has just returned from a visit to France and Italy. He had met journalists, bankers, authors, as well as hotel-keepers and men of business. He had met Americans in Paris, and a few Germans in Italy. Everywhere, he declares, he found the same unexpected confidence that England was to save the world. In some cases hotel-keepers and shopkeepers had even expressed this confidence in a very practical way. My friend went to buy a ticket from Genoa to Paris on the 5th January. The lire he had with him were only just sufficient for his needs of the next two days, and he had left his cheque-book in his room. So he suggested that he should pay the next day. "You cannot. To-morrow is a holiday. But pay the day after, pay on any of the to-morrows!" And he travelled to Paris with a ticket for which he had paid £0 0s. 0d. In the same way English residents in Italy are being urged not to pay their bills, to wait till the pound has displaced gold altogether, even to borrow what they need from the banks. Yet Italy is suffering from high prices and unemployment. The professional beggar is scarce; but the out-of-works knocking at the door increase every week.

* * *

It is hard for any foreigner to hear the truth about Fascism; but it is easier than it was to meet people who speak their real thoughts. My friend was at a party when there was present a well-known Italian journalist, a Fascist, but a critical member of the party. He spoke with great freedom; he complained of the absence of the old fanaticism ("idealism," he called it), the increase of the purely professional and self-seeking politician, the extreme badness of the party's propaganda, the lack of vision at headquarters. He altogether excepted Mussolini from these charges; and he spoke with a more guarded appreciation of the Duce's son-in-law, who is apparently destined to be his successor, now that his brother is dead. Still, the main impression gathered by my friend was that the younger and more intelligent Fascists were now disillusioned: once more the Promised Land is covered with peg-claimers, littered by option-holders. The Italian journalist claimed that the only parallel to Fascist Rome was the Renaissance Rome of Boccaccio's story: when the converted French Jew visited that city he returned to Paris, strengthened in the faith, because "the religion which can stand the state of things that flourishes at Rome must be true."

* * *

I knew and liked William Graham. He was of that clear-headed, hard-working, rather unimaginative type which gets to the top in the Civil Service and which quickly gets near, but not to the top, in politics. He gained a great reputation by his handling of the Labour Government's Coal Bill in the House of Commons—his astonishing grasp and memory of figures, his patience, good temper and industry were excellent House-of-Commons qualities. When I saw him just after the election he was horribly bowled over. Everyone had believed his Edinburgh seat quite safe, and he had received a quantity of letters from naive people who had voted against him and then regretted putting the National candidate into Parliament. He had been on the Board of a well-known concern which had besought him to return when his period of office was over, but which, in a great state of patriotism after the election, decided after all that it did not want one of the "shirkers" back. He was, I think, very deeply hurt by the attacks upon his integrity made by some of his late colleagues during the election. I notice that his bitterest maligner is saying very nice things about him now that he is dead.

* * *

I should like to add a footnote to B. K. M.'s article on C. P. Scott which appeared in these columns last week and interested me in my professional capacity as a journalist. I have known only two first-class editors, Scott of the *Manchester Guardian* and Massingham of the *Nation*. (It is arguable that there have been only two first-class editors in English journalism during the last 30 years and that they were Scott and Massingham.) The two men were in many ways extraordinarily different, and in the days when Scott was still unaccountably under the influence of Mr. Lloyd George I have listened to streams of unprintable invective from Massingham. But their editorial technique was in some very important ways similar. Neither of them ever yielded to the chief temptation of modern journalism, the running of stunts. Politically and socially they treated their papers as instruments for advocating "clearly imagined lines of policy," and their success and the individual character which they imprinted upon the *Manchester Guardian* and *Nation* were largely due to their realisation of the journalistic effect of skilful repetition. Day after day, week after week, year after year, they pursued their policies, saying the same thing in a hundred different ways but in the same journalistic tone of voice. I learnt to be a journalist under Massingham, by writing a weekly article for him. I remember his saying to me on a Monday when I went to discuss the subject: "Say the same thing as we said last week, but in different language; it is only when a paper has said the same thing for ten weeks running that people begin to listen to it."

* * *

Has any democratically elected statesman ever been as unpopular as Mr. Hoover? A friend of mine who pays frequent visits to the United States writes to me from New York that Hoover's name is now universally linked up with the depression and that a common form of New Year's greeting is to turn out an empty pocket. It is called the "Hoover Salute." "Two more years of Hoover and Gandhi will be the best-dressed man in the world" is another popular saying. The Hoover-Mellon story has already come to England, but not in its correct form. The original version is:

Hoover and Mellon walking in Washington.

H.H.: "Lend me a nickel, Andy; I want to call up a friend."

MELLON. "I'll lend you two nickels, and then you can call up all your friends." CRITIC.

IN CELLAR COOL

IT is certain that, if some of the people who have never been inside a public-house were to go into a public-house, they would see much that would shock them. They would see men standing beside a dull-looking bar for the purpose of drinking what are called intoxicating liquors. Occasionally, a solitary man might dive in, receive a small glass partly filled with a poisonous-looking yellow fluid, swallow it at a gulp, and hurry out again. But the majority of the men would remain wasting their time talking to each other; and, even if one of them, with a more sensitive conscience than the rest, set down his glass and said firmly, "Must go home," one of the others would be sure to say, "Just one more," and, the man with the sensitive conscience having conceded, "Well, it must be the last," the flow of intoxicating liquor would begin again.

I have myself often been shocked by what I have seen in public-houses. Most of them are ugly, dull and uncomfortable. To sit in an ordinary public-house alone for the space even of half an hour is to experience agonies of boredom. The English publican may on the whole be acquitted of one charge; he has done nothing to make drinking attractive to his customers. No Puritan, desiring to discourage men from drinking, could have invented a better plan than the ordinary public-house, whose bars would be intolerable to anyone who did not crave for a drink more than for comfort or beauty. It is true that, with the spread of temperance, many publicans have found it necessary to provide games for their customers in order to make the public-house more attractive than the unattractive streets. But, to a great extent, the trade has relied in the past on the determination of the common man to drink intoxicating liquor, whatever the surroundings. And as a result we see the least lovely of all the temples ever built to Bacchus, the English public-house.

Those who are shocked by the spectacle of a human being putting a glass of intoxicating liquor to his lips have, naturally enough, not been greatly concerned about seeing that the best possible environment should be provided for his misdeed. One might as well expect them to join a movement for improving the amenities of opium-dens. As drinkers, on the other hand, are the meekest of men, accepting the worst beer and the worst whisky without protest, no agitation for reform could be expected to originate among them. There have been such agitations in recent times, but they were not born in the saloon-bars of public houses. They were the work of men who neither regarded a man with a glass in his hand as an awful spectacle, nor considered that the man with a glass in his hand was getting what the publican was in duty bound to give him.

It is fortunate that this movement for civilising drinking was begun, for otherwise those who wished to abolish drinking altogether would have been provided with a plausible excuse for doing so. Apart from the fact that drink was sold in it, there was little in the old public-house that was worth saving. It has been said that it was detestation of the saloon, not love of the soda-fountain, that brought Prohibition into America. And many of the public-houses of the nineteenth century—and of the twentieth—were arguments that could be used more effectively by the Prohibitionist than by a defender of the ancient habit of drinking.

Even to-day, however, the position of the drinker—that is, of the man who at certain times prefers a glass of beer to a glass of water—is by no means secure. There are still sincere and resolute men on his track, bent upon snatching the deadly glass out of his hand and smashing it beyond recovery. In their eyes he is a man slowly committing suicide by poisoning himself. It is true that the vegetarian in some cases takes the same view of the meat-eater, and there are anti-tobacconists who say the same thing of the smoker. But neither the meat-eater nor the smoker is an object of such widespread and energetic censure as the drinker. He alone is taken in hand like a Borstal boy, and has the eye of the law on him as inescapably as a ticket of leave man. He finds barriers in his path wherever he goes, and is regulated as much as if he were a patient in a hospital.

I am not one of those who object on principle to interference. If the right people could be found to interfere, I should like to see even more interference in civilised countries than already occurs. A theoretic passion for the liberty of anybody to do anything he likes seems to me sentimental nonsense. At the same time, when human beings begin to interfere with each other, they are almost invariably the wrong people to interfere and they interfere in the wrong way. Hence the general resentment of interference—a resentment which finds expression in such epithets as "Nosey Parker." The interferers, of course, would be called "Nosey Parkers," even if they were interferers of the right sort. They always are. "Nosey Parkerism" of the right sort is necessary to the conduct of civilisation. At the same time, "Nosey Parkerism" in general is given a bad name by the "Nosey Parkers" who interfere for the sake of interfering, and it is extremely important that the practice of interfering for the sake of interfering should be suppressed wherever it breaks out.

It seems to me that a glaring example of the love of interference for its own sake is to be found in the recommendation of the Licensing Commission that the special facilities for drinking in railway-trains should be abolished. I do not know by what slip of draftsmanship railway-trains were hitherto specially favoured; but I gather that, when the hours for drinking in public-houses, hotels, restaurants and clubs were restricted, it still remained perfectly legal to drink what one pleased in the restaurant car of a railway train at any hour of the day while the train was in motion. In theory, this ought to have led to an enormous increase in railway travel during the hours in which the public-houses were closed. The teetotal propagandist frequently tells us that, when the hours for drinking facilities differ in different areas, the drinking population rushes from the area in which there are no facilities to the area in which they are in full swing. If this were true, we should have expected to hear of drinkers storming the buses and the taxis as soon as the doors of the public-houses were shut in the afternoon, and driving in hordes to Waterloo, Paddington, Euston and St. Pancras. We should have had photographs in the newspapers showing mobs of bibulous zealots struggling on the platforms of the stations in the desperate effort to get even standing-room on the long-distance trains on which drink would be obtained at four o'clock in the afternoon. Perhaps, if the railways had been under more efficient business management, we should have witnessed such scenes; for if there had been real business men in control they would have advertised special services of tavern trains every afternoon to Skegness, Exeter, Birmingham, and Widnes. The destination of the train would have mattered little. The drinker, if he is the man the propagandists say, would have taken it to Hell or to Halifax provided it had a licence to sell wine, beer and spirits between three o'clock and six.

Whether on account of the inefficiency of railway-directors or for some other reason, however, none of these things seems to have happened. Not even once have I heard of an enthusiastic beer-drinker who took a ticket for Penzance in order to be able to drink the whole afternoon. The number of railway-travellers, I fancy, diminished instead of increasing since the trains were afforded these special facilities. And even of those who travelled, no one apparently was ever known to get drunk on liquor obtained in the train. At least, the Commission could discover no evidence that anyone had ever done so.

And yet the Licensing Commission recommends that the facilities for drinking on trains should be restricted in the same fashion as the facilities for drinking in public-houses.

What is the object? Obviously, it cannot be to keep people sober, or to discourage excessive drinking. There can only be two possible reasons for the recommendation. One is that the present position is anomalous, but what rational human being objects to an anomaly that does nobody any harm? The other is that drinking is in itself an evil practice that must be prevented by law wherever possible. I do not suppose that while the whole world is in peril any Government will waste its time in taking the whisky-and-soda away from the tired railway-traveller. But power and prosperity will return, and with them will return the passion for interfering with the harmless occupations of human beings from a vague notion that to interfere with human beings will necessarily do them good. So strongly am I opposed to this view that I should even allow dominoes to be played in public-houses without interference. The thin end of the wedge, you say? Well, that is the end I like.

Y. Y.

WHAT DOES OUR FOOD COST?

BETWEEN the producer and the purchaser of home-grown food there is a gap that only better knowledge, followed by strong action, can reduce. The Government should take steps to bring producer and consumer nearer to one another, if only because lack of food is the most dangerous cause of public discontent. There can be no better way of improving conditions than by publishing to the world the actual cost of raising corn and growing milk, mutton, beef and bacon. At present all these costs are hidden, thousands of clever intermediaries obscure every issue. To such extraordinary heights has human impudence soared that, when the coming of a wheat quota was announced in the House of Commons, a member of that House could rise in his place and ask the Minister to look after the interests of the Milling and Master Bakers' Associations. I inquired lately, on the Alban Hills, if there were an association for the protection of the wolves that descend upon the flocks, and was told that not only do the shepherds know nothing of such an association, but they employ dogs and guns for the protection of their sheep!

What does wheat cost to produce in England on suitable soil with the aid of modern machinery? Given a good year, it is more than probable that the cost does not exceed thirty-five shillings a quarter, or seven pounds per acre, allowing the average yield, which can be increased, says Sir Rowland Biffen, by the use of well-selected seed. We must not go back to war-time costs because there is a mass of machinery available in England to-day that had not been heard of then. If forty shillings a quarter is to be a fixed price, every well-equipped farmer owning adequate land should make money, but the price of wheat, provided that supplies from overseas are no higher than the home-grown, will never justify a sevenpenny loaf. Fivepence over the counter will be nearer the proper figure, unless the Minister considers the interests of the Milling and Master Bakers' Associations. Into those interests no question of the cheap loaf can possibly intrude. But, given an arable farm under modern management, associated with a modern mill and a steam bakery, the actual cost of the loaf could be ascertained beyond a peradventure, and if the hungry man in the street and the harassed housewife at home know what the staff of life ought to cost without delivery, there would be a rapid and compulsory fall in prices. Surely millers and bakers were sent by Providence to feed people, not to exploit them.

It is a common complaint that as a nation we do not drink enough milk; if it were cheaper folk would mend their ways. Now there is only one popular method of determining prices. First the combines cut the farmer's price to the bone. Then the N.F.U., whose members include men who are shareholders in combines and consequently combine right-eousness with caution, argue with the combines and ask all the world to realise that they are being robbed. When the dispute has gone far enough, agreement is reached. The combines agree to pay more—and pass the increase on to the consumer amid applause, while they pass an increased dividend to those of their members who are farmers. Sevenpence a quart is the current price for milk that is neither of Grade A nor Tuberculin Tested, which carries the legal measure of butter-fat and, if rumour speak truly, no more. But only a few months ago I was allowed to see the figures of a great herd from which Grade A, T.T. milk derives, and although there was no sparing of expense in the matter of equipment and every cow received all possible attention, the cost of the milk, the finest available, was a shade under threepence a quart, and the selling price a shade under fourpence. Why, if better milk than you and I drink can be produced for threepence, should we pay sevenpence? Are we going to respond to the invitation to drink more in these circumstances? One hopes not. We know now, thanks to the researches of Dr. Boyd Orr and others, that we can change C3 to A1 children by giving them a daily ration of separated milk. They do not need the cream, it is the mineral content that builds them up. Skim or "fleet" milk may fetch no more than a penny a quart on the farm where the most of it goes to pigs and poultry, but if you try to buy it in the towns you will find the greatest difficulty. There is not sufficient profit in the sale, so the children must go without. Milk distribution is rapidly tending to become a thriving monopoly at the public expense, but if the costs of production could be broadcast it is at least likely that the general public would become both vocal and effective.

The fluctuations in pig prices are so remarkable that there is a saying on the farms to the effect that pigs are either dirt or gold. At the time of writing, it is almost impossible to get sixpence per pound for the most useful of domestic animals on the hoof, but the price of cooked ham in a first-class shop will be as high as four and sixpence a pound. What is the alchemy that effects the transformation? There is not even the usual excuse that the public will only buy certain cuts. The American packers have stated over and over again that it is possible to sell everything pertaining to pigs, with the solitary exception of the squeal. At a certain abattoir in the country where pigs are killed humanely by means of the trap and pistol, every edible part of the pig other than the hams is made into excellent sausages which are eighty per cent. meat. They can be sold at a substantial profit for thirty per cent. less than the price asked for well-known brands on which the profit is probably not less than cent. per cent.

As it is with pigs, so it is with beef and mutton. I asked my butcher in town if he bought his own cattle and sheep. "No, we should find that very difficult," he replied, "we have to buy from the wholesale trade." In other words, the distributors have placed it beyond the power or beyond the interest of the retailer to select his own animals, have them killed at Islington or elsewhere, and sold direct to the consumer. Sixpence per pound on the hoof would satisfy the farmer for his prime steers, but whether the housewife gets steer, bull or cow beef in return for her money is a matter of judgment mingled with luck. The familiar story that the butcher must charge high prices for prime joints because the wicked working-classes insist upon sirloins of beef and saddles of mutton will not bear examination; it is founded upon conditions that obtained for a little while during the war when manual labour was at a premium. Now, the fact of real significance is that the housewife does not know what her mutton, beef and pork ought to cost, and in the case of mutton the issue is further confused by the practice of Victorian farmers who still believe that root-fed sheep are the salvation of arable land. Modern systems of land dressing have passed these farmers by, they look askance at the grass sheep, the Welsh Mountain,

Cheviots, Exmoors and the rest that live where the Down breeds would starve. If the costs of raising mutton, beef and pork could be set out, say twice yearly, from farms where the acts of husbandry are modern, the public would learn and the intermediaries of the meat trade would be taught.

I can give an instance of waste in mutton production that seems worthy of record. A few years ago, while on a caravan tour round rural England, I went to a butcher's shop in Lincoln to buy mutton chops. The butcher took the carcase of a Lincoln sheep and proceeded to cut it up. Before he could sell me the chops he was forced, for conscience' sake, to cut away large slices of fat which he threw into a pail. "Where does all your mutton fat go?" I inquired. "To the soap factories," he replied. To raise sheep in order to make soap at the housewife's expense seems extravagant. If a farmer of the kind one has in mind were to keep a few of the heavy undesirables by the side of the grass flocks and publish the relative costs, certain breeds of sheep would soon be as dead as mutton. As things are, the cost of raising sheep for the soap trade will regulate the price of the joint of mutton from the sturdy little animal that can live by its wits on a mountainside for eight months in the year.

The public investigation of food prices, advisable in the season of Free Trade, will become more than ever essential under a system of Protection. If middlemen could rob on an open market, what may they not hope to achieve on a restricted one? Let us remember, too, that as organisations these people are very wealthy and can finance costly press campaigns. They can advance materially the cost of living and, little though the Government may desire to interfere with trade, it should be clear to the most conservative-minded that exploitation of food leads first to suffering and finally to revolt. It is true that the Government declared that there should be no profiteering in food. The statement was followed promptly by an unchallenged rise in the price of the loaf, making it, in relation to wheat prices, about one half penny per pound too dear. Had our rulers been in earnest they would have taken action, but there can be very few members of the House to whom an extra penny on the two-pound loaf is a matter of significance; the burden falls upon the poorest housewives, and they have no spokesman in the Cabinet.

From bread we pass to milk, from milk to meat, from meat to dairy produce. There is no more serious problem before the country than that of feeding our millions, and the road to fair prices lies by way of the model farm with its accurate costings available to the man and, still more emphatically, to the woman in the street. Dr. Addison proposed some large-scale experiments that were rejected by the House of Lords on the score of expense. They might have availed to reduce the cost of living by that sinister figure, ten per cent.

S. L. B.

"THE HAND OF GOD"

His Holiness the Pope, reviewing the year 1931, *declared that "God's hand is lying heavily upon the world."*

WHEN harvests failed, or the lean cattle died
Through drought or pest, our ancestors descried
In their resultant misery the rod
Of an offended God:

So, while the victims on the altar bled
And heretics were shortened by the head,
Men looked askance on impious folk who planned
To irrigate the land.

When, like a pestilence, through Europe swept
The Magyar hordes, "With reverence accept
God's scourge for sin," the pious cried again,
"Resistance is in vain."

To-day, it seems, we see God's wrath revealed
In crops that give too plentiful a yield;
Harvests so bounteous that we cannot eat
But burn His surplus wheat.

We see His hand lie heavy on the world
In broken pacts; in battle-flags unfurled
Because the League shrinks from all rude extremes—
'Tis fated all, it seems. . . .

Or is it that his Holiness would draw
From Holy Writ one half-forgotten law:
That what men sow they reap, and for our shame
We have ourselves to blame?

MACFLECKNOE.

Correspondence

CRUELTY AT THE CIRCUS

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION.

SIR,—As a fellow-countryman and a humanitarian I am grateful to Mr. Francis Birrell for opening up the question of performing animals in THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION—grateful for facts, concerning this season's programme at Olympia, which should be remembered:

1. The process of learning to play Rugger may be painful to bull dogs.
2. Two of the chimpanzees wear muzzles. Why?
3. There is a sinister look about the whole exhibition (*i.e.*, the tiger's turn).
4. Bears should be eliminated from circuses.

On the other hand, one cannot help feeling exceedingly annoyed at the academic attitude he adopts and at some of the misstatements of fact in his article. He would have avoided these errors had he taken the trouble to get in touch with the Performing and Captive Animals' Defence League before writing his readable article. On such questions as pictures and plum puddings Mr. Birrell has the right to be as academic as he pleases, but it seems to me that this right does not exist when one speaks or writes or even thinks on the question as to whether or no our fellow creatures are suffering pain.

His attitude reminds me of that adopted by the speaker in an appreciation of last year's circus, on the wireless.

"Personally, caged animals do *not* appeal to me . . . but those who are not hampered by such scruples will delight in the flowing grace of the tiger as he jumps on and off the horse which is carefully padded and protected."

He did *not* add that these pads had spikes on the outside.

But suppose I said to a starving man: "Personally I dislike murder, but for those who have no such scruples there's an overfed and obese gentleman yonder who has a wad of notes in his pocket." The law might not be able to touch me if the man acted on my suggestion, but, I rather imagine I should have a pretty miserable time of it, none the less.

By the way, the B.B.C. is to be congratulated on not repeating the talk on the circus this year.

Mr. Birrell is not sure about the evidence. He wants details. Well, then, in Heaven's name, why doesn't he go and find out the facts for himself before putting pen to paper, if he *won't* take the word of people like Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell and Lord Auckland? What right has he to demand more than that which satisfied the House of Lords when they passed the Performing Animals Bill in 1930?

What evidence has he that "the humanitarian ground is slightly changing?" So far as this League is concerned—and we have been the spearhead of the attack against this form of cruelty—one can only answer in the words of Betsy Trotwood, "stuff and nonsense."

An eagle eye will discern other points in Mr. Birrell's article which will annoy by their injustice. "The humanitarians have unwisely abandoned the original and impregnable position of objecting to performing animal turns because of the pleasure they give to the spectators." When, may I ask, was this position ever held as the main plank in our platform—or at all, for that matter? It is true that the National Association of Head Teachers passed a resolution condemning performing animal turns as being detrimental to the character of the children under their control. This was in 1930, and two similar organisations have since

followed suit. Does Mr. Birrell disagree with them? On the above point our attitude is the same as that of Jack London, who wrote: "I found . . . a body of cruelty so horrible that I am confident that no normal person exists who, once aware of it, could ever enjoy looking on at any trained animal turn."

I hope that Mr. Birrell will reply to this letter, and if before doing so he will give due weight to the fact that in *principle* he is equally responsible with the rest of us for every act of cruelty inflicted in those trades, professions, and occupations where animals are the victims and where such cruelties are allowed by law, but that in *degree* his responsibility is in direct ratio to his ability as a writer, I have no doubt but that he will do the right thing and take his fair share in the general movement to abolish one of the most shocking forms of cruelty in England to-day, and since "there's no compassion like a penny," he will be glad to know that a fiver will make him a life member of this League.—Yours, etc.,

17 Buckingham Street, Adelphi, London, W.C.2. EDMUND T. MACMICHAEL. Hon. Secretary.

THE FIRM HAND IN INDIA

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION.

SIR,—In your comments this week you say in regard to India: "We are confronted with a national movement such as we had to face a few years ago in Ireland." One will fully agree with this, but you do not follow on to the logical conclusion.

Gandhi is no more representative of India than de Valera was of Ireland. In proportion to total population it is doubtful whether his and Congress' following would be as big as de Valera's was in Ireland, and it will only be by ignoring Gandhi and his following in the same way as de Valera was ignored in the Irish settlement that India will be able to develop self-government on the lines which the Prime Minister has sketched. If and when a form of self-government for India has been evolved it is almost as certain as anything can be that Gandhi will be treated by the new government as firmly as Mr. Cosgrave's government is dealing with de Valera.

Gandhi is not and never will be a constructive statesman, and what your correspondent Mr. Bolton says of his requests for information while in this country shows that he does not grasp this fact. Gandhi was merely playing at being constructive and our India Office played up to him, but the moment Gandhi gets back to India he throws off the mask, pretends he is still asking for information but puts threats, only thinly veiled, into the end of his message; and Lord Willingdon rightly calls his bluff.

Let us get on by all means with the formulation of plans for Indian self-government, but let us work with those who have not only some sense of responsibility, which Gandhi has shown he does not possess, but also some constructive ideas, and whose sole idea is not the dominance of one small not very reputable caste of class.—Yours, etc.

The Knowles, Watford, Herts. M. J. E. TILNEY,

KENYA

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION.

SIR,—I wish I could agree with so generous an adversary as Mr. Lawrence. And I wish I could hope to persuade readers of the error into which his school of anthropology, at the moment so widely supported, has fallen. But you so often take the unpopular or unfashionable side yourself that you may allow this word of warning.

The question to be answered is well put by Mr. Lawrence when he writes, describing the results of the policy I advocate: "Thus a situation would arise that would rival the Indian one in difficulty of solution." Granted that India is an awful warning. Just what does it warn us of? India has been Europeanised, partially, of course. Was that a mistake, or something worse than a mistake? Or is the reason that the success of democracy in India is so dubious, our failure to Europeanise enough? Whichever answer we make, all alike must recognise that the ideas some Indians have absorbed from European literature are incompatible with both Hinduism and Islam. And it is also true that the desire for social and political liberty had its source, not in Vedas or Koran, but in such books as the *Areopagitica* and *Burke's Speeches*—above all in the *New Testament*. The main reason, I suggest, that the future in India is so perilous is that so few Indians have undergone this mental process. Men like Mr. Sastri not only belong to our world, but give it an added lustre. If a Sastri were at the head of every Indian school there would be nothing to fear for the future of India. The warning to be drawn from the situation of India to-day, and applied to Africa, is that for a century we failed to give Indians of our best generously enough.

Our own case is essentially the same. For a thousand years our ancestors believed that disaster would fall both on individuals and on society unless everyone believed such doctrines as that there is a place above the earth where the good go after death and another place under the earth where the bad go. The English peasantry, to the discredit of the churches, still believe these places exist. Mr. Lawrence, like the rest of us, does not. (Some of us may still regard as valid the ethic of the *New Testament*. But that is another story.) Has our conduct suffered in consequence of our abandonment of the age-long beliefs of Christendom? To some extent it probably has. But no one of us doubts that on balance we have gained by knowing more of the truth than our ancestors. Nor can we doubt that all our institutions would work better if the knowledge available to the few were available to all. Ignorance in every country causes vastly more suffering than vice.

It is because that is even more true of Africans living in the tribal stage of society than of ourselves or of Indians that it is so needful to offer Africans liberating knowledge. I give in my book illustrations of the suffering that results from beliefs that are, not separably remediable, but vital to tribal religion and culture. Neither knowledge nor civilisation has, or ever had, a racial frontier. How absurd it is to call the diffusion of Western ideas and habits "Europeanising"! We owe elements in it as various as astronomy and ethics to the Semites. Our knowledge and civilisation are a torch first lit long ages ago. Once, it burned brightly in Babylon when our ancestors were skin-clad barbarians. It is our duty to hand on the torch, to share our relative enlightenment, for which we deserve no credit, with the less enlightened, whose ignorance is no fault of theirs. That, and not the development of the hypothetical uniquely African civilisation some, but not all, anthropologists desire for them, is what, to my knowledge, Africans themselves desire. Indeed, as has been the case with Indians, the alternative is not whether they will absorb Western ideas or not. It is whether they will learn with difficulty from tutors who grudge the sharing of their knowledge, and so have no cause for gratitude. Or whether we freely and heartily invite Africans to share all that we ourselves recognise to be best in our own lives.—Yours, etc.,

NORMAN LEYS.

THE POST OFFICE

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION.

SIR,—I note that THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION is of the opinion that the present organisation of the Post Office is "idiotically obsolete."

THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION is a journal for which many postal workers have a great admiration. Many of your readers believe in State ownership, in co-ordination, in service and in the authority of the people through Parliament. I wonder if these good folk will realise how far you have gone away from their fundamental convictions when you utter things the like of these before us. Are we not entitled to ask if capitalism is not also idiotically obsolete? If it is, and evidence for that is clearly easy to garner, then why give the capitalist his cue by assuring him that our only example of nation-wide State ownership is idiotically obsolete also? After all, the statement is so far away from the facts that I am prompted to ask you, quite respectfully, what you really know about the Post Office, apart from the general answer that might be given by any well-informed man on the broader aspects. It would be impossible for an institution which was idiotically obsolete to handle the traffic the Post Office handles every day. It would be impossible for an idiotic and obsolete institution to have made the steady progress in telegraph and telephone matters through the post-war years. Rationalisation in industry generally has strewn its path with suffering and unemployment, but this idiotically obsolete Post Office of yours has rationalised, centralised and organised with not a quarter of the suffering and displacement which followed attempts at these things in the outside world. Our contention is that the Post Office is open to criticism, but not on its fundamental basis. For us, that basis remains unassailable, and we believe in the ultimate ownership by the people of the great basic industries.

The Post Office to us is democracy, with a scope and usefulness

capable of responding to the growth of democracy. We wonder if the same can be said of those industries which capital has carefully rationalised, organised and for which it has obtained a legal certificate before taking them clean away from democratic control. We feel we can ask you to stand by us in our effort to re-organise and widen the scope of the Post Office as national property. We ask you to assist us to make the practical experience we have available to the Postmaster-General. We even feel that you will agree that we can ask you to help us to a fuller sense of Workers' Control and Trade Union responsibility within our undertaking.

Finally, will you please scan the list of signatories who are now approaching the Government on Post Office matters, and, having scanned the names of the crew, ask yourself if you can, in consonance with your political convictions, row in that particular galley?—Yours, etc.,

43 Cromwell Road,
London, S.W.7.

FRANCIS ANDREWS,
Editor, the *Post*.
Organ of the Union of Post Office Workers.

[We do not think there is any danger of the Post Office being put into private hands. We are entirely in agreement that that would be a disaster, and our object, like that of the *Post*, is to "re-organise and widen the scope of the Post Office as national property." The great efficiency of the Post Office in certain respects does not prevent its organisation being obsolete in others. We refer our correspondent to the article in our issue of November 7th by Major Attlee, M.P., a Socialist as well as ex-Postmaster-General.—ED. *N.S. & N.*]

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION.

SIR,—"The most urgent problem of national reconstruction is that of the Post Office," says Lord Wolmer, and he adduces the fact that 320 M.P.s have signed a memorial asking the Prime Minister for a Committee to examine the organisation and status of the Post Office as evidence that more than half the House of Commons agrees with him. Perhaps he is right; but what a commentary this is on the mind and the sense of reality of our legislators.

We have still two-and-three-quarter millions of unemployed men and women in the country. Side by side with this great reservoir of waste productive capacity we have widespread and terrible want—a vast proportion of our population living below the poverty-line level. As a consequence of our budgetary difficulties we have taken steps to depress appallingly the meagre standard of living of those to whom our national mishandling of our industrial affairs denies the opportunity of working; and at the same time, amid a growing productive capacity, there is a general tendency to bring down the standard of life of those who are at work.

In this situation it is claimed that "more than half the House of Commons is agreed that the most urgent problem of national reconstruction is that of the Post Office."

Is there *any* hope for this country in 1932?—Yours, etc.,

7 Netherton Grove,
Chelsea, S.W.10.

J. ALLEN SKINNER.

THE DOUGLAS SCHEME

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION.

SIR,—Mr. Wentworth's letter in your last issue convicts me of an error in my review of Major Douglas's book. It is clear that the price of any output of goods made by the use of an overdraft should in normal times be such as to enable the manufacturer to repay the overdraft with interest. This does not, however, mean that there is any deficiency of purchasing power to buy the goods at a price covering all expenses of production. The bank credit used by the manufacturer for running expenses passes in payments of wages, etc., into the incomes of producers in the various direct and indirect processes contributing to the final product, and these elements of purchasing power, together with the other payments made by the manufacturer out of his own resources, provide a sum sufficient to buy the product. The repayment of the overdraft, together with the interest on its use, does not signify an insufficiency of power to purchase the product. The aggregate payments of expenses of production, inclusive of the interest on the capital employed, furnish a volume of purchasing power adequate to buy the whole product, or an equivalent amount of other products.—Yours, etc.,

Hampstead.

J. A. HOBSON.

MILK

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION.

SIR,—The unique value of milk is mainly qualitative and depends on its extensive mineral, extractive, and vitamin contents. It is a thousand pities that my profession and all interested in health cannot unreservedly advocate the consumption of more milk.

The ideal is, certainly, the eradication of tuberculosis from cattle, but I find that most authorities are agreed that anything like an immediate solution by wholesale slaughter is impossible; and it is safe to say that it certainly will not be done in the present financial state of the country. Whatever the ideal solution, the urgent fact remains that roughly six children are dying every day through infection by the bovine tubercle bacillus. This being so, can we afford to wait for the ideal solution? Surely the universal pasteurisation of all milk other than Certified and Grade A Tuberculin Tested is an urgent necessity. A. B. refers to pasteurised milk as "cooked" and as being impaired in flavour: considering that in pasteurisation the temperature must not exceed 150° F. the term "cooked" might safely be confined to that abomination—sterilised milk. As for impairment of flavour, the fact that about 90 per cent. of London's milk is pasteurised and continues to be consumed is sufficient evidence that any such impairment is of no practical consequence. Apart from the fact that no adverse evidence has resulted from the consumption of a large amount of pasteurised milk for many years, there is now valuable evidence to the effect that pasteurisation does not appreciably reduce nutritional value.

A. B. refers to an experiment on the effect of giving milk to schoolchildren. If she is referring to the Lanarkshire experiment in 1930 reported by the Department of Health for Scotland, she might have pointed out that there was a third group of children to which the same milk, but pasteurised, was given and the conclusion was: "In so far as the conditions of the investigation are concerned the effects of raw and pasteurised milk on growth in weight and height are, so far as we can judge, equal."

Looking at the problem from the dairy-farming aspect, I suggest the crux of the matter is reached from two considerations. The first is that of the unorganised state of the very small units of the farming industry. The second is the bacteriological aspect of milk itself. Milk is an ideal culture medium and there may be hundreds of thousands of bacteria per cubic centimetre a few hours after milking. The desirable cleanliness of milk, therefore, is not that of the careful housewife but rather that of the surgeon. The handling of milk from the time it leaves the cow to the time it reaches the consumer must be done on aseptic principles.

Can one ever expect the majority of isolated small milk producers to have either the requisite bacteriological knowledge or adequate machinery to achieve the necessary asepsis?—Yours, etc.,

D. L. TUCKER, L.R.C.P., D.P.H.

Welwyn Garden City.

MR. MURRY'S FRIVOLITY

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION.

SIR,—It is—to me—a new experience, and an exhilarating one, to be charged with "frivolity" as a critic, especially when the acme of my frivolity is discovered in my statement that "Metaphor is as ultimate as speech, and speech as ultimate as thought." Mr. Richard Sunne disagrees. I respect his disagreement. Why should he not respect mine? My sentence may be mistaken. I do not believe it is. But why call it "a *wild* generalisation"? There is nothing wild about it. It is rather tame. I assure Mr. Sunne that his efforts to work me up into a desperate character will be strenuously resisted by my other hostile critics.

If a really wild statement is required, I should choose Mr. Sunne's own dictum that Godwin was "a pinchbeck Rousseauite." I know very well that *Political Justice* is not read to-day, so I cannot fruitfully appeal to that remarkable and influential book. Still, I suggest that Mr. Sunne should read it before he refers to Godwin disrespectfully again. For I cannot believe that if he had read it he would have called Godwin "pinchbeck." To the ordinary reader let me commend Godwin's beautiful little biography of Mary Wollstonecraft: he will discover for himself that an attitude of contempt towards Godwin really *is* frivolous.—Yours, etc.,

J. MIDDLETON MURRY.

The Old Rectory, Larling, Nr. Norwich.

[Richard Sunne writes: I am glad that Mr. Murry is exhilarated; sorry that his exhilaration should inspire him to keep on with the hopeless task of showing Godwin to be a hero and an original thinker. I have read *Caleb Williams*, *The Life of Mary Wollstonecraft*, and enough of *Political Justice* to be certain that Godwin is a second-hand thinker. I will, if Mr. Murry likes, withdraw "pinchbeck Rousseauite" and substitute "venerable horse-leech," the title awarded by Leslie Stephen whose knowledge of Godwin's philosophy and competence to judge it Mr. Murry will hardly dispute. Mr. Murry's exhilaration prevents him from answering any of my specific questions about Godwin and his character; and also, I am glad to see, keeps him silent about Shakespeare's alleged divorce "from any faith in immortality or after justice."

—*Ed.* N. S. & N.]

MR. LENZ'S YELL

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION.

SIR,—It may interest "Y. Y." and his readers to know that the throwing of a chessman in an onlooker's face has occurred in history. In Bunting's *Ancient Music of Ireland* it is told that King Conor "anxious to know if Deirdre's 'beauty yet lived upon her' sends a messenger to see and report. The messenger returns to say that, not only is Deirdre 'the fairest woman on the ridge of the world,' but that he himself has been wounded by Naisi, who had resented his gazing in at the window of the Red Branch, by flinging a chessman at his head and dashing out one of his eyes."—Yours, etc.,

The Old Manor House, Halliford Green, Middlesex. FRANCIS SPRING RICE.

Miscellany

THE FRENCH EXHIBITION—II.

WITH Poussin the French tradition of painting takes on its distinctive character. There are many earlier paintings which show typical French qualities, but it is difficult to trace in them a continuous stream of tradition. And yet the founder of the French tradition lived almost all his life in Rome. Rome of the seventeenth century was none too healthy a place for an artist. I know not what changes in Italian society had brought on the scene a new type of artist—foreshadowed no doubt by Benvenuto Cellini—the type of the self-advertising gangster who found it easier to "bump off" a rival painter than to beat him at his job. Poussin managed to attain to the highest fame without becoming embroiled in the intrigues of this artist world and became the type of the solitary, unsociable, indefatigable worker, living solely in and for his art, which has had many successors in the succeeding centuries. Indeed, not the least part of his legacy to France lay in his example of a passionately disinterested devotion to art and an exacting artistic conscience, the full effect of which comes out in the heroic story of the so-called revolutionary artists of the nineteenth century.

In Gallery III there are three great Poussins. "The Marriage of St. Catherine" (113) gives the best idea of his early manner, with its rich Venetian fullness of colour, dimmed here by the yellow varnish. In composition, too, it scarcely departs from the notions of the great Cinquecento designers. The other two are both Depositions, though the mood which each evokes is curiously different. In the Dublin picture (120) the insistence on contrasts of horizontals and uprights, and the great rectangular block made by the figures, impose a sense of hushed and tragic gloom which is heightened by the dark and menacing tonality and the sudden notes of almost crude local colour.

The Munich Deposition (128) is much lighter in key with an escape into a luminous distance. The agitated tempo of the movements suggests a more uncontrolled grief which culminates in the writhing figure of the wailing St. John, and here again a sharp unprepared note of pale green makes an arresting accent. Poussin no doubt always thought of his compositions in terms of drama, or, rather, of dramatic moods, but it is very rarely that those moods emerge so evidently from the theme as in these two pictures, and even here it would be vain to look for dramatically expressive gesture in the sense in which Giotto or Rembrandt understood it. The figures tell far more by their general shape and disposition than by movements directly expressive of psychological states.

A hitherto scarcely known Poussin is the Italian landscape (149) belonging to Prince Paul of Yugoslavia. It is a grand and sombre landscape in which nothing is closely specified except the construction of the terrain, the relation of the narrow flats of the valley to the impending woods and the mountain vistas beyond. Another landscape in a more strictly classic style is Lord Derby's "Phocian" (144). Like so many Poussins, it forces one to think of Milton, so similar is Poussin's attitude towards Nature, his choice of sites and his pensive delight in their evocation. It is a marvellously complete and fascinating composition in which one can find endless felicities of placing and construction. It is a temptation to linger over Poussin, and there are fortunately many great examples at Burlington House, for no artist repays a formal analysis more than he does. But there is too much that demands attention.

For Claude is almost as fully represented as Poussin, and is scarcely less intriguing. I think one can understand his peculiar quality best by realising that he was almost a Henri Rousseau of the seventeenth century. He was not, it is true, an autodidact like the *douanier*, since he learned from that almost too competent German, Adam Elsheimer, but he was nearly as naive and as little conversant with the cultured world. He used the formula of classic landscape partly because it lay ready to his hand, and also because, living when he did, he felt strongly the poetical overtones of classical façades fronting wide spaces of sea and of the sacred shades of secular groves, and it was out of such themes that he constructed most of his compositions. Having decided to paint these things, he set about it in an almost pathetically industrious and unintelligent way with no idea of how to select the significant and reject the superfluous in his long-winded and laboured descriptions. And again, with a notion that the job must be thoroughly done, he introduced his grotesquely ill-drawn and lifeless figures, painting all the details of their dress in perfect innocence and good faith. All this would be sufficient to make him one of the most boring painters that ever lived but for the fact that he also had an intensely vivid and original feeling for harmonies of tone and a marvellous power of discovering them in what he saw, and beside that a quite personal conception of spatial design. This immediate and fascinated apprehension of certain atmospheric effects of tone and colour distinguishes him from Poussin, who always kept at a greater distance from the actual vision. It never occurred to Claude to exploit fully and unreservedly this native gift. He confided his most intimate feelings, his most original discoveries to his drawings. (If only for these one should visit the temporary collection of French drawings now on view at the British Museum.) He thought of a picture as a public performance which had its own special etiquette. It was too solemn and formal an affair for those odd accidental combinations of form and tone which fascinated him as he wandered through Rome and across the Campagna. But though we can only guess what Claude might have been if he had dared to be his full self, how entrancing all the same are those naively formal lucubrations. What a daring composition, all the same, is the sunset from a seaport, from the Uffizi, (139) with its vast spaces of sea and air; what a radiance of late afternoon light floods the "Enée chassant le cerf" (145), and how freely the clump of trees in the Duke of Westminster's "Morning" (153) rises into the still air. Poussin's skies may thrill one by their beautiful arabesques of cloud, but he never builds the

vault of heaven as Claude does. In that, as in so many of his effects, Claude was the precursor of the great modern landscape painters. And then there is the " Enchanted Castle " (162) of which one never can tire. Here the purity and intensity of Claude's poetical feeling comes triumphantly through all the clumsy artifices and laborious literalisms of the execution by the sheer splendour of the design and the unfailing harmony of the tone.

Rigaud was a very genuine artist who generally painted rather tiresome portraits, but he shows something of his real quality in the " Bossuet " (146). On the other hand, Philippe de Champaigne's " Richelieu " (148), though it is a solid and dignified portrait, gives no idea of how personal he could be in the bare austerity and restraint of his best work. Nor does Lesueur fare well in the three pictures by him. For though the " Muses " (158) is a beautifully harmonised group, it shows nothing of his specific quality, his " primitive " feeling for colour and tone and the strange beauty of his space compositions. This is a pity, because he is still a much underrated artist.

In Gallery V Watteau and Chardin are the great figures. Perhaps the finest of all the Watteaus is the familiar " Plaisirs de Bal " (166) from Dulwich. What a delicious extract Watteau distilled from later Renaissance and from Baroque art, from Veronese and Rubens, and by what subtle means he toned down their exuberance and abandonment, and gave that note of a new more delicate sensibility which the rarer social atmosphere of the eighteenth century gave out. How scrupulously he modulates his colours, with what subtlety he effects his almost imperceptible transitions so that the tone and colour harmony flows through the whole composition in an unbroken stream. " La Danse " (167) is an unusual work with the figure of the girl standing in such isolated prominence against the widespread landscape. It is unusually sharp and strong in colour, but marvellously right in its setting. Only in the group of children to the left there is something slightly disquieting, both in the oversweet, almost Greuze-like insistence on childish innocence and in the high tonality which seems to break with the rest of the composition. " Les Comediens Italiens " (177) is of interest because it was done while Watteau was under Dr. Meade's care in London. One wonders whether, while in London, he became fascinated by some work of Jan Steen's. For in the colour of this he has abandoned his own sweet rich notes for something closely akin to Jan Steen's coppery reds and browns. But it is none the less a perfectly achieved harmony. Particularly lovely also are " l'Homme jouant de la Vielle " (203), which is wonderfully incisive in character in spite of its deliciously loose free handling, and " La Famille " (205), with its sober brownish colour and subdued tone, through which we feel the subdued glow of Watteau's voluptuous colour.

ROGER FRY.

TWO POEMS

COME, MELANCHOLY

COME, Melancholy, come, Delight:
Let's croak of misery, like a frog.
Let us pretend the window's shut
For the cat, and a door for the dog.
Let us pretend that every door's
Made fast, to all except the Bee—
Who finds a key-hole every time,
And passes in without a key.
Let us pretend that Life's a babe
All wrapt in clay, with pins of ice,
Without a nurse to tuck it in,
Or soothe it with a softer voice.
And when we have imagined these,
Refusing peace, and scorning mirth—
We'll light our pipes and blow a smoke
That casts a halo on our birth!

AGE AND YOUTH

THE music's dull—I trust my Ears;
The day is cold—I blame no Blood;
The air has mist—I trust my Eyes;
My bread is stale—my Teeth hold good;
My bed is hard—I blame no Bones;
My drink is sour—I trust my Tongue.
Ears, Blood and Eyes; Teeth, Tongue and Bones—
Tell me what's wrong,
And speak the truth.
" *It's strange, Old man, but no complaint*
Has come from Youth."

W. H. DAVIES.

WHAT IS A CELEBRITY?

THERE is a thin time coming in the musical world for all who are not celebrities; if, indeed, it has not already come. But in that case it will be worse still. We are told that there are about eleven thousand musicians in England now out of work on account of the " talkies " having superseded the " movies." With their fate I am not concerned, this being a social and economic, not a musical problem. But this unemployment among musicians has been used in the attempt to get the Ministry of Labour to restrict further the entry into this country of foreign musicians. In so far as this applies to the keeping out of foreign jazz-band and dance-band players there may be something to be said for it, although it does not seem likely that poor, unknown foreign musicians stand any better chance of employment here under present conditions than our own poor and unknown musicians.

The Incorporated Society of Musicians and the Ministry of Labour now declare that there is to be no attempt at keeping out " celebrities "; so I presume Paul Whiteman's band or any other " celebrity " will be allowed in. Indeed, how could popular celebrities be stopped? Placid and long-suffering as the British public is, I can see it submitting to anything; but I do not see the powerful interests which alone engage or are able to engage celebrities submitting to such restrictions. Therefore, I take leave to declare that the whole policy of the Incorporated Society of Musicians and the Ministry of Labour with regard to restricting the entry of foreign musicians is utter humbug. As the Ministry of Labour is naturally completely ignorant and will have to take professional opinion as to who is and who is not a musical celebrity, or who has or has not something individual and distinctive to contribute, it simply means that the professional musician or musicians it employs to decide these matters will be put in the position of an unknown autocratic censor hiding behind a Government Department. This censor will not dare to attempt to stop popular celebrities. He will not dare, for example, to stop Paul Whiteman's band if the Savoy Hotel wanted to entertain Lord Beaverbrook by letting him dance to Paul Whiteman's celebrated band. He will not dare to stop Fritz Kreisler, Paderewski, or Artur Schnabel from landing on our hospitable shores; but he will be able to stop with complete impunity the Kreislers, Paderewskis and Schnabels of to-morrow. In fact, we might as well put up a big sign upon the white cliffs of Dover: " This country is now reserved for the celebrated."

There is, of course, no need for the aged, or perhaps even the middle-aged, to worry about this policy. The stock of celebrities will last their time. But what is going to happen when Kreisler, Paderewski, Toscanini, Artur Schnabel, Richard Strauss, Stravinsky, and a few others are dead? No doubt the idea is that by then the Incorporated Society of Musicians will have hatched out by its special process of isolated incubation a complete set of home-grown " celebrities." May I be there to hear them!

Let me say at once that good artists are utterly opposed to this policy of celebrities. Further, I declare that it is outside the province of any Government Department to

employ a professional censor hiding behind that Government Department to decide which musicians, whether foreign or native, have or have not got artistic merit. I am certain that the majority of honest professional musicians will agree with me on this point, and I am glad to see that one eminent English musician, Mr. Harold Samuel, has had the courage to resign from the Incorporated Society of Musicians as a protest against its present policy. We all know how much musicians and the public alike suffer from this craze for "celebrities," and we know that it is mere publicity nowadays which makes a celebrity, and that the connection between being celebrated and having artistic merit is so elastic as to allow bad musicans to be celebrated and good musicians to be obscure.

The world has become so large, knowledge so specialised, and the daily press so widely circulated that the public has to depend wholly on names. A celebrity is simply a name that is known by many thousands of people, and the greater the number of people who know his name the more celebrated he is. Obviously any name that is mentioned continually in a newspaper with a million circulation becomes a celebrity. But this has nothing to do with merit, and, as a matter of fact, those who can discriminate are constantly amused, if they are not disgusted, with the pseudo scientific and artistic celebrities that are manufactured in this way. Actually, in any art there are many varieties of merit, and each has its place and its value. There is even a place—and an honourable place—for mediocrity. It is the most vulgar cant to pretend to enjoy only the best—meaning the most celebrated. But those who are in positions of power to exploit the common desire to see celebrities, read celebrities, meet celebrities, or hear of celebrities, thrive on this universal vulgarity and do their best to flatter it and increase it.

Years ago I heard the editor of a daily newspaper who knew the attractions of publicity deploring the fact that there were no "names" in music criticism he could "buy." And there is no doubt that if he could have made his music critics celebrated many more of his readers would have read the music criticisms his paper printed. Now it has been announced that another newspaper (presumably stimulated by the Incorporated Society of Musicians and the Ministry of Labour's awe of celebrities), has rejected the nonentities* who have for years been its music critics and has engaged a celebrity, and a "whopping" celebrity, a regular "whale," in the shape of Sir Landon Ronald, as its music critic.

It seems very questionable on general grounds whether it is a good policy for the heads of schools and colleges of music to add to their duties that of professional music criticism; or whether the press is likely to benefit by discarding the professional journalist for the professional expert who, at the same time, has other and presumably arduous duties to perform. The principal of a school of music will naturally continue, when functioning as music critic, to consider his good students as worthy and his bad students as unworthy of praise, and this will at least tend to secure a too great unanimity of opinion about the students' respective merits. It is a commonplace of education that different teachers may bring out different merits, and that one system of tuition may suit one particular type of student and not another. To make a student's teacher also his public critic after he has finished his education and left his school is something new in our public life, and I cannot see that there is anything to be said in its favour. It must be remembered that most professional musicians and principals of schools of music are composers too, and if they are also critics on the staffs of daily newspapers their students will be faced with many an awkward dilemma. They may be afraid of playing their teachers' compositions badly and they may equally be afraid of not playing them at all. This is not a position into which any young musician leaving his school should be placed, even if it is wholly imaginary, existing only in his own mind. Every good teacher honestly thinks his own methods best—otherwise he would change them—so there ought to be in the press a quite independent critical opinion. In the meantime, I feel that the only thing left for the principals of the Royal College of Music and the Royal Academy of Music to do is to get themselves appointed as music critics to the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* respectively.

W. J. TURNER.

* As I have explained "celebrity," my colleagues will understand how flattering this description is.

PLAYS AND PICTURES

Jacobean Burlesque

MR. Harcourt Williams has dared much in attempting to produce *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* purely and simply as entertainment. As a revelation of its time, presented with meticulous accuracy, it can be illuminating and interesting. But with all the goodwill in the world, I am unable to find it more than faintly and spasmodically amusing when it sets out with the deliberate and sole intention of making me laugh. Perhaps the music-halls have been my ruin; for there were moments when I longed to take some of the good people about me who were finding everything so excruciatingly funny and acquaint them with the full-moon lunacy of the Marx Brothers. In truth, the occasional shock of pleased recognition such as nearly all the Elizabethans are wont to give us from time to time, in this case will not balance the buffoonery which seems to be handicapped rather than helped by the text. And, in view of the present-day theatre's dangerous deficiency, it is a little hard to smile overmuch at an ancient lampoon of the stage's romantic extravagance. Dame Sybil Thorndike holds the piece together as the Citizen's Wife with almost too great a zeal, and Mr. Ralph Richardson as their roaring apprentice was funny at intervals; but the players seemed altogether too patient with their interventions.

* * *

Pabst's film, *Westfront* 1918, which was reviewed on this page last week, begins at the Academy Cinema on Sunday, January 17th, and not, as was then stated, on January 10th.

Things to see and hear in the coming week:—

Sunday, January 17th—
Mrs. Israel Zangwill on "World Disarmament," Conway Hall, 11
Pouishnoff, Piano Recital, Palladium, 3.15.
"Volpone," Garrick Theatre.

Monday, January 18th—
Schnabel, Piano Recital, Queen's Hall, 8.15.
Howard League for Penal Reform. Anniversary Service. Address by the Bishop of Ripon, St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, 8.15.

Tuesday, January 19th—
"While Parents Sleep," by Anthony Kimmins, Royalty Theatre.
H. Wilson Harris on "Europe Since the War," Morley College, 8.
Schnabel, Piano Recital, Queen's Hall, 8.15.
Prince Mirsky on "The Soviet Intelligentsia During the Last 10 Years," 1 Montague Street, W.C., 8.15.
Kingsley Martin on "The New Journalism," B.B.C., 8.30.

Wednesday, January 20th—
"The Judgment of Dr. Johnson," by G. K. Chesterton, and "The Comforter," by Laurence Housman, Arts Theatre;
B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, Queen's Hall, 8.15.

Thursday, January 21st—
George Bedborough on "Recent Developments in the Birth Control Movement in America," Essex Hall, Strand, 8.

Current Literature

BOOKS IN GENERAL

ONE of the most entertaining papers I know is the *Publisher and Bookseller*, which is controlled by the Publishers' Association and the Associated Booksellers. I suppose its appeal would be small to those unhappy folk who take no interest in facts about books, whose heart beats no faster, and whose curiosity is unstirred when they see the sacred signs " Cr. 8vo " or " Med. 8vo," or 4to, or " Fol." Yet, while the weekly lists of books published are invaluable to bibliographer and bibliophile, the *Publisher and Bookseller* contains much meat before we reach this rather special savoury. In the issue for last week is published a table of the books which were " best sellers " during last year. The estimate is based on the lists sent in by booksellers all over the country month by month. It is, then, an estimate of books bought by private readers; it excludes, or puts in their proper places, those volumes which have a large circulating library success; and then fade away before the glare of the next work of indubitable genius. It may also exclude some popular novels which are sold in shops that have only a ten per cent. claim to be bookshops. I remember, twenty-five years ago, hearing from the keeper of a small general stationery store in Cornwall that, in an average year, he sold about five hundred copies of the latest novel by Mr. Hocking, either Joseph or Silas. I do not suppose Mr. Hocking's books would ever figure in the lists sent to the *Publisher and Bookseller*, or that Miss Dell's do, or Mrs. Hull's; yet I suspect that more copies of these are sold than of any of the books in the annual estimate. Then the monthly list is divided into four categories—fiction; biography, etc.; poetry and drama; miscellaneous. It is plain that the inclusion in these lists of *An Outline of Modern Knowledge*—one of the best sellers—does not mean that quite so many people have bought it as have bought Mr. Jeffrey Farnol's *Jade of Destiny*, also in the list.

* * *

The list of best sellers contains one hundred and twelve books—none of which was mentioned in the monthly lists less than three times, while the highest number of mentions is twenty-four. (Six or seven booksellers, as a rule, send in monthly lists.) Of the books named five are volumes of plays, eleven are verse, seventeen are biographical, forty-four are fiction. The book that heads the list with twenty-four mentions is the omnibus edition of Mr. Shaw's plays; it was certainly a triumph of cheapness. I can remember no book that so well contrived to look like a book still in spite of the disadvantages that might have crushed a less ingenious publisher and printer. One has only to compare it to the huge omnibus volumes—also in two columns—in which one was offered Burton's *Anatomy*, or Smollett, or Fielding, or Boswell's *Johnson* sixty or seventy years ago to notice the immense strides that have been made in book production. After Mr. Shaw comes *Famous Plays of* 1931, with twenty-two mentions—a very good position for a volume that was only published in August. Then we have Mr. Strachey's *Portraits in Miniature*, with eighteen mentions, and Mr. Wells's *Science of Life*, with seventeen. The first novel is, rather surprisingly, Mr. John Buchan's *Blanket of the Dark*. I have a sincere admiration for Mr. Buchan's gifts as a story-teller; he is as absurdly underestimated as is the fate of nearly all " extravert " novelists to-day; but *Blanket of the Dark* was a poor example of his talents. It was published in July and has sixteen mentions. Mr. Cronin's *Hatter's Castle* has the same number, but was issued in May, and so loses on the months.

* * *

The first biography to be mentioned, although it was only issued in October, is Mr. Guedalla's *The Duke*. By general agreement it would, I think, deserve this pre-eminence; but it says little for the taste of the public in literary biography that Mr. Michael Sadleir's brilliant study of Lytton's youth, *Edward and Rosina*, should not be in the list at all. It must presumably be due to popular ignorance of the subject—the book itself was a most remarkable example of care and industry, and conveyed history while it told the story of two people's lives. Perhaps we are shy of Lytton—for there are modern novelists who might just reach high enough to polish his boots, or play with the tassel of his cane, who have a thin, cocktail version of his manner, and lounge peevishly in a poor imitation of his magnificently insolent swagger. The first book of verse is the Poet Laureate's *Minnie Maylow's Story*; his collected poems were also a best seller. Other poets in the list are Mr. A. P. Herbert, Mr. James Stephens, Mr. Humbert Wolfe, Robert Bridges (the new edition of the *Shorter Poems*), A. E., Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie, Gerard Hopkins. There are three anthologies—Mr. Knox's *Humorous Verse*, Mr. Abercrombie's *New English Poems* and *One Hundred and One Ballades*. I am rather surprised at the absence or slight appearance of books on science, psychology and anthropology. It is possible that the activity shown in these studies, especially at the University of London, does not represent any corresponding interest in the rest of Great Britain and Ireland. There is a similar silence about economics, which is, perhaps, more natural, as serious books on economics are uncommonly stiff reading. The only book mentioned which would be allowed to have any connection with that science is Mr. Hartley Withers' *Everybody's Business*, and that comes last but one.

* * *

Just before Christmas the bookshops of London were full; people who had thought they would " economise " decided that they had to give some presents, and chose books. It must have been a satisfaction to the publishers and booksellers that so many people have responded to their very intelligent advertising campaign. Certainly last year if any business firms deserved to succeed it was the publishers. They sensibly and courageously proceeded with their business as much as possible as though times were normal; and, as abnormal, depressed conditions are always largely the result of mental and moral cowardice, they have performed a genuine public service. No lover of literature could, of course, declare that there were no superfluous books issued last year. There has not been a year, at least since the middle of the eighteenth century, when that could be said. But it would be pedantic and ungracious to refuse to admit that other books than those of great literary merit have a right to exist, and that their production can be one of the pleasantest and most serviceable forms of business. I take it as a very healthy symptom of a general improvement in public taste that when people felt, as most of us did at Christmas time, that we could not afford to be carelessly spendthrift, so many turned naturally to the purchasing of books. It was felt, and felt rightly, that no one, however severely economical, could be shocked at the giving of books, since books at any rate symbolise those values in life which must at all costs be preserved; they represent neither luxury nor selfish indulgence, but the reasoned art of life which we call culture. It is an old fashion for authors to gibe, sometimes in friendliness, at the publisher; for the moment it would be a good thing to refrain from that attitude. A good publisher is not " merely a business man," if by that odd expression we mean a man who is only interested in his financial profits; he is a man who has chosen that business because of a lively interest in literature, a desire to share his love for books; and it is that spirit which enabled the publishers to make so good a showing in so hard a time. They were selling things in the value of which they themselves believed.

RICHARD SUNNE.

NAPOLEON

Bonaparte's Adventure in Egypt. By P. G. ELGOOD. Oxford University Press. 12s. 6d.

When we read about the past and try to understand the behaviour of great men, it is not so much our smallness that hinders us as our inexperience. Take the behaviour of Napoleon in Egypt. At any given point it is easy to follow, and can be paralleled by our own. Here he was vain, here generous, here lustful, here afraid; here he grew sentimental about the East, here he reacted against it, and idealised his own country. One has had all these feelings oneself; they present no difficulty. Difficulty starts when we try to connect one given point with the next, and realise the adventure as a whole. We fail here, for the reason that we have never had to bear Napoleon's particular burden of responsibility, nor undergone the training that would enable us to bear it. The average reader of this review has not been born in Corsica or served in the artillery or won battles in Italy or quelled a riot in Paris; he or she is probably a quiet enlightened person, connected with education and possessed of a smallish car, and if such a person invaded Egypt in 1798, the expedition would be conducted in a different way and would end in a different kind of mess. In a sense, we are close up to the great man; we can always measure ourselves against his isolated actions, and say "Oh, so that's what you are like. Oh, so you give a banquet in Cairo, do you, and put copies of *The Rights of Man* and the Koran into each of the table napkins. Very well." There is a genuine intimacy here, which we do right to cultivate. But in another sense the great man is infinitely remote; we cannot follow him as he moves from point to point, because the ballast conditioning his momentum is unknown to us, and our comments on him are therefore bound to be either sycophantic or pert.

If one takes this view of history, one prefers a modest historian, and Colonel Elgood, in this admirable study, makes no pretence of turning his hero inside out. It is a pleasure to read him after so much knowingness and brilliancy, after so much pseudo-interpretation that reveals no one except the interpreter. He just gives us facts, and comments on them when he is qualified to do so, and his own experience of Egypt and of military affairs are two important qualifications—he does not bring us to the bottom of the business. The expedition was unusually queer. Changes in fortune and in policy made it a mixture of a drama and a dream, and even gave it a touch of the nightmare quality that descended later upon St. Helena. The French are victorious; they defeat the Mamelukes, occupy Cairo, organise finance and irrigation, promote the sciences, and favour Islam. Yet all the time they are vanquished as well; Nelson has destroyed their fleet, they can get no newspapers, and Turkey, hailed by them as an ally, retorts by attacking them. Through all this strangeness Napoleon moves, young, supple, and vulgar, often excited, yet cool enough to extricate himself at the end of two years, and to return with the air of a conqueror to France. His army, abandoned by him, is not destroyed: we are denied even that finality. "The dog barks, but the caravan moves on," says an Arabic proverb which Colonel Elgood quotes, and the changeless East seems to resume its course when Menou surrenders and the last protesting Frenchman is bowed out of Alexandria.

Of course the East is not changeless; and Napoleon did rather more to alter it than Colonel Elgood admits. He wanted to understand it and to be friendly, and this was a new attitude for a European, and its effects were far-reaching. He broke for ever from the imbecility of the Crusades, and the East, though it might not respond to the change, could not fail to notice it, and to be puzzled in a new way. Following a French tradition, he took several experts with him, including even a poet, and he established the "Institut d'Egypte" at Cairo for the purpose of studying and assisting the country. And perhaps the only complaint one has against Colonel Elgood is that he says rather too little about this Institut, and much too little about the magnificent *Description d'Egypte* which was the final fruit of its labours. The *Description* is the first scientific survey of an Oriental country that had ever been attempted, and since it is not easily obtainable in England a brief analysis of its contents would have been welcome. No doubt Napoleon's interest in science was limited; like most men of action, he thought it existed for the purpose of providing results, and he rebuked his savants if they wasted their time over the fundamentals of chemistry, or if they failed to locate the course of Amr's vanished canal in the course of an afternoon's picnic near Suez. He did, however, provide them with opportunities of which they made good use, and (except when he lost his bearings) he did insist on a more respectful attitude towards Islam. Islam had been feared, but had not yet been accepted as a civilisation; Christendom had that lesson to learn in Napoleon's day, and she has not succeeded in learning it properly yet.

Colonel Elgood's book can be confidently recommended. It is well illustrated, and it reproduces the interesting maps from the *Description*.

E. M. FORSTER.

SMALL BEER FROM BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Purefoy Letters. 1735–53. Edited by G. ELAND, F.S.A. 2 Vols. Sidgwick and Jackson. 42s.

It is notorious that when, just over a hundred years ago, the third Lord Braybrooke presented his grateful countrymen with the incomparable diary of Samuel Pepys, he omitted much from it on the score of indelicacy. But he also omitted much on the score of triviality. In those days the only history deemed worthy of consideration was contained in the records of State affairs and the public doings of important men. Nothing could be more remote from the predilections of to-day. If we are still avid for biographies of the great, it is in dressing-gown rather than in robes of office that we like to envisage them; and we are well content to contemplate the lives of the obscurest folk if only they can be revealed to us with sufficient intimacy. That trend of taste which has given fiction so tremendous a vogue has made us particularists in history also.

The letters of Henry Purefoy, lord of the manor of Shalstone in Bucks, and of his mother, Elizabeth (a Fish of Hertfordshire), which were written when George II was King, are, therefore, sure of a welcome. For they constitute a chronicle of doings and interests almost exclusively domestic. The Purefoys were typical county folk. They had owned Shalstone since early in the fifteenth century (after the death of Henry, who stayed a bachelor, it passed by virtue of marriage to the Hampshire family of Jervoise of Herriard); they were the sort of people who are put in the commission of the peace and appointed to deputy lieutenancies; but they never even started on the ascent from local to national eminence. Not one of them attained to that very moderate measure of celebrity which would have entitled him to a place in the *Dictionary of National Biography*; for William Purefoy the regicide does not figure in their pedigree. Their vision was confined by the boundaries of their estate and of the parish in which it lay. There is no evidence that either Henry or Elizabeth, though she was, in the obsolete sense of the word, a notable woman, paid any heed whatever to the larger movements of their time.

Nor did either of them cultivate the epistolary art for its own sake. They indulged in neither gossip, persiflage nor philosophy. It was always with a practical purpose that they sat down to their escritoires—to order household necessities, to further estate business, to engage servants or to lodge complaints against delinquent tradesmen or trespassers on their rights. And they displayed an admirable brevity, saying their necessary say in a few lines and getting it over. Thus Elizabeth, writing to her godchild, with whom she was presumably on terms of intimacy:

> Dear Sukey
>
> My Cookmaid is gone, she neither could dresse victualls nor would learn; if the maid you mentioned who has an Impediment in her Speech will undertake my Businesse I am very willing she should come, and I desire you will send her over.
>
> Our compliments attend you all and I am
>
> Your affect. Godmother.

Mrs. Purefoy may have been affectionate, but she was hardly expansive.

It was perhaps to the same young woman that Henry was referring when he wrote to Peter Moulson, wine merchant and one of his agents in London:

> I am favoured with yours of the 3rd instant. As to Mr. Price the Clergyman's Daughters wee will let them alone. My mother has a God daughter who was bred up under her care, I may fairly say she is a Girl of as sharp sense as any in England and as stirring and housewifely as may be, and can sow well and understands to do everything in an house—if she had no fortune, if she was to be sold she is worth five hundred pound. As to her Person it is agreeable enough, and her fortune is £200 down and £200 at the death of her mother who is upwards of 60 years of age. This nobody can hinder her of and she has a chance to have more.

Could anything be more precisely to the point, or define with greater lucidity the proper qualifications of a wife?

Recognising the uncompromisingly practical nature of these letters, Mr. Eland has arranged them not in strict chronological sequence but according to their subjects. It is possible to cavil at this policy, but it has its undeniable convenience. For the correspondence has the virtues of a quarry. Superficially regarded it is but barren ground, deficient in the picturesque, but it contains the authentic building-stone of history; and it is useful to have a map of it to show one what kind of metal is to be found in what quarter. For the student of domestic economy, of manners, or of costume, for the analyst of prices, even for the philologist, there is a store of illuminating matter in these laconic documents. As for the student of human nature, there are letters half a page long containing the essence of a novel which Fielding might have written.

These volumes are most attractively presented, well printed, well illustrated, and, a most excellent virtue, light in the hand. The only unnecessary pages in them are those on which the editor apologises for his imagined shortcomings. He could not have performed what he confesses was a labour of love with greater discretion or in a more acceptable manner. In his introduction and notes he tells us just what we need to know for an appreciation of the text. All that one could wish is that he had been more generous with his extracts from Henry Purefoy's diary. "I was in my Bedchamber when Betty Baranet was shutting ye windows, but I an't sure whether I spoke to her or not." A man who thought it worth while to make such a record as that was a character worth studying. FRANCIS BICKLEY.

JOHN SKELTON

The Complete Poems of John Skelton. Edited by PHILIP HENDERSON. Dent. 10s. 6d.

The publishers of this book recommend it for its possession of a monopoly. It is the only complete edition of Skelton's poems published since 1843, and the edition of 1843 is now rare and very difficult to obtain. But there are some people to whom this will seem a warning against the book, not a recommendation; and even those who read it with the most pleasure will not generally be surprised that the poet has been so long out of popularity. Like all writers of extremely particular, topical satire, he ran a great risk of becoming obscure and uninteresting to later generations; it is a price that those writers pay for touching their own generation so closely. Indeed all kinds of satire must lose some meaning with time, even those that seem inspired by a quite impersonal indignation against vices and abuses only, not the particular people who set the example in them; contemporary readers of these too probably discern, or think they discern, personal innuendo under the general terms, and their pleasure is sharpened by guessing what notorious offenders the writer had in mind: but this loss of meaning is much greater with satirists like Skelton who are openly concerned with specific people and events. With these it is partly a question of luck how far the subject of their satire remains interesting to later generations; for it depends on how well the records of their age are preserved, and how widely, and in what detail, its history is known; and partly, of course, but not altogether, it is a question of the writer's own genius, the skill and vitality of his attack.

The period in which Skelton wrote, the reign of Henry VIII, is not, certainly, a very obscure period, though perhaps most ordinary readers, for whom especially Mr. Henderson has prepared this edition, will call it up rather vaguely as a grotesque and flamboyant age, and not be very familiar with its detailed history. But Skelton himself increased his readers' difficulties by the mystifications which he used to avert Wolsey's anger, and some of the nonsense that must have been almost transparent to his contemporaries is to-day dark even to historians. But this does not apply to more than a few poems. It is in language that Skelton's period has injured him most with posterity. For his language is recognisably the English that we speak now, so that his readers do not have to start at the beginning and learn it, as they do with Old English or a foreign language; yet in their reading they are constantly irritated by coming upon unknown words, or familiar words differently used; or, what may be more serious, they come upon familiar words whose meaning is near enough to the current meaning for them not to notice any difference; and so they may misread the spirit of a passage altogether. Certainly the misreading is not always a loss to the author. Sometimes the strangeness of a word or phrase, which was quite ordinary when it was written, will give a spurious charm to the verse. And even the epithet "spurious" is questionable; this charm is nature and time disposing of what man has proposed, like the weathering of buildings which makes them, too, admired for qualities not the gift of the architect. And up to a point it is excellent for people to enjoy the naturally acquired beauty of a poem as well as its beauty as a work of art; but sometimes the first crushes out the second, and readers of even such a serious and sophisticated poet as Chaucer may feel, from the unfamiliarity of his language, that he is quaint and naive; and then it is better to clear away the moss and get back as nearly as possible to the austerity of the original stone.

Skelton suffers less than Chaucer because he is often really quaint, not, probably, naively quaint, but consciously. An eccentric manner was not only a safeguard for him, but a part of his technique, and he assumed and dropped it according to the needs of his art. Yet his verse, too, suffers from changes that have come over language and style; it is more often quaint than he made it so. It has the shapelessness and volubility of its time, and it gives one that sense, which verse of its time often gives, of having come to a house where nothing ever happens according to plan, and nobody seems to notice. In these ways as well as in idiom it seems sometimes inaccessibly remote from the modern reader.

Mr. Henderson has aimed at making his edition of this difficult poet a popular one. He has given it a sound historical and critical preface, partly modernised the spelling, and provided translations of the Latin lines of the poems and the obsolete English words, with a few historical notes, at the foot of each page. The modernisation of the spelling, in an edition which is the first of its author for over eighty years, will be regretted by scholars; but spelling is, of all the properties of poetry, the least the poet's own, the most dictated by his period; and it is this estranging emphasis on period that is particularly to be avoided in a popular edition. Indeed in poetry so clearly made to be spoken or sung as Skelton's, the question of spelling in itself is unimportant. It is in those cases where change of spelling must change the sound of a word that it becomes im-

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portant, and even in those I think that the greater clearness justifies Mr. Henderson in his alterations. He does not, of course, change the spelling where it would destroy rhyme. In his translations Mr. Henderson is generally correct, though not penetratingly so; but sometimes he sentimentalises his author a little, which is one of the more serious ways in which a translator can betray his trust: "lovely flower of a bird," for "flos volucrum formose," seems to me such a sentimentalisation. And sometimes the translation misses the point of the Latin altogether; for instance, "Est mihi lasciva pagina, vita proba," is a clear enough antithesis, but "I have a sportive page, a blameless life," Mr. Henderson's rendering, is a remark of no import whatever. But on the whole the translations are useful; though indeed there are some Latin lines so corrupt that no translation can help, and some that are so inapposite, so unrelated to their English context, that they seem to be still in another language when they are translated.

So Mr. Henderson has made Skelton's poems a little less difficult for modern readers, but he has not been able to make them easy: it is not likely that they will ever be very widely read again. They have against them the impermanent nature of their themes, a language grown obsolete, and the poet's peculiar taste for eccentricity: and yet when people consider this, and then consider that Mr. Henderson has thought it worth while to edit a popular edition of Skelton's poems, and Dent to publish it, they must believe that these poems have exceptional qualities to survive against so many obstacles; and so they have. They have the natural hardihood which in an illiterate nation gives poetry the best chance of survival; a colloquial vigour of diction and rhythms, like the rhythms of nursery rhymes, so simple and emphatic and memorable that they give a kind of oracular finality to the verse, apart from its sense: for instance

> God amend all,
> That all amend may!
> Amen, quoth Parrot,
> The royal popinjay:

and this refrain, from the poem to Mistress Margery Wentworth:

> With margerain gentle,
> The flower of goodlihead,
> Embroidered the mantle
> Is of your maidenhead—

where the more slurred rhythm more subtly takes possession of the mind.

In a nation that keeps its poetry in books not in heads, this memorableness is not a practically necessary quality, but it is still one of the most organic qualities of poetry. It is what makes Skelton still much more than an antiquarian's poet. He has, besides, such fresh and vehement ways of attack that if he had not been a poet he might have been amusing even in prose. But when he writes of bad priests:—

> Their matins madly said
> Nothing devoutly prayed;
> Their learning is so small,
> Their primes and hours fall
> And leap out of their lips
> Like sawdust or dry chips—

it is the quick, contemptuous rush of the verse that sweeps away these impostors more effectually even than the ridiculous comparison.

E. J. SCOVELL.

MONKEY HILL

The Social Life of Monkeys and Apes. By S. ZUCKERMAN. Kegan Paul. 15s.

Hoppius, a naturalist of the eighteenth century, expressed the opinion that "it would lead not a little to Philosophy, if one were to spend a day" with our Simian relations "exploring how far human wit exceeds theirs, what difference lies between brutish and rational discrimination . . ." Since Darwin's time we have learned to subscribe to this opinion in much the same way as a Labour Prime Minister subscribes to Socialist slogans when he is addressing a conference of his party supporters. In fact there has been deplorably little intensive investigation of those characteristics which the human species shares with the sub-human primates alone. One reason for this is that monkeys and apes are costly material for laboratory use. They do not thrive well in the laboratory. Before they can provide satisfactory material for experimental investigation into the characteristics of their social behaviour there are still things to be found out about their natural history.

Concerning the natural history of monkeys and apes there is a profuse anecdotal literature, illustrating the way in which different species conform to the requirements of the ethical, aesthetic and political predilections of explorers, missionaries and resident magistrates. Dr. Zuckerman is one of the very few trained physiologists who have devoted time to the study of this group in their natural surroundings. He has benefited from special opportunites during his association with the Zoological Society. As an experimental biologist he has made important contributions to our knowledge of the reproductive cycle of monkeys. In this book he confines himself mainly to what has interested him directly. His book is the more interesting on that account.

The sub-human primates live in groups consisting generally of more than one family. This gregariousness is not associated with any functional differentiation outside the limits of the family. It does not appear to be conditioned by special limitations set by the available supply of food. The thesis of Dr. Zuckerman is that the gregarious habit of monkeys and apes is primarily determined by a peculiarity that distinguishes them from all the remaining orders of mammals. This is that the female will receive the male at any phase in a succession of cycles not curtailed by seasons of infertility. Consequently the author devotes several chapters to an exposition of recent work on mammalian reproduction. Though this carries him somewhat far afield from the ostensible topic of the book, it is not to be regretted. He has given us an extremely lucid and a welcome account of a field of experimental research in which recent progress has been rapid. The advances expounded have important bearings on other questions of human interest, not least because our present knowledge of human reproductive physiology is conspicuously inadequate to sustain dogmatic interpretations of the factors underlying population growth. Considerable space is devoted to a vivid and arresting account of the author's own observations on the sexual habits of baboons in their original habitat and on the Monkey Hill at Regent's Park. What he has to say on this subject may be recommended to those who pronounce the adjective unnatural with an intonation of disapproval.

Characteristics of behaviour arising from the co-ordination of hand and eye movements are of special interest because such characteristics are pre-eminently peculiar to the primates as a group and to those aspects of human social behaviour likely to be illuminated by the study of simian physiology. Unfortunately there has been little experimental research on these lines recorded hitherto, and Dr. Zuckerman judiciously adopts a conservative attitude to what has been done. He passes lightly over the philosophical exploits of Kohler's disciples. It was high time to point out, as he has done, that the entire Gestalt cult rests on studies of the behaviour of animals which have not been previously reared under controlled conditions.

Throughout *The Social Life of Monkeys and Apes* the author has attempted to write for a wider reading public than biological specialists, and he has succeeded admirably. The great value of the book lies in focusing attention on the paucity of reliable information about the physiology of behaviour in man's nearest allies, and emphasising the imperative need for more generous encouragement of experimental inquiry in a field which "would lead not a little to Philosophy."

LANCELOT HOGBEN.

MORE BIOGRAPHY

Isabella of Spain By W. T. WALSH. Sheed & Ward. 15s.
Germaine De Staël. By R. M. WILSON. Eyre & Spottiswoode. 15s.
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manner. Mr. Walsh, whose industry and scholarship are above suspicion, has unfortunately tried to write simultaneously a historical novel, a serious biography, and a melodrama; and naturally enough he has not been successful. Isabella was a determined, devout and single-purposed woman. Her stolid, unimaginative character was best expressed in a genius for organisation. She was the exact antithesis of the brilliant, reckless, internationally minded Ferdinand; and perhaps that is why they not only lived harmoniously together but were able to unite the petty kingdoms of the Peninsula into a first-class power and expel Islam from western Europe. Isabella devoted her life to the crusade against the Grenadine Moors and to the furthering and purifying of Christianity among her subjects. Mr. Walsh has made this clear, and he has written some admirable chapters on the workings of the Holy Office; but his attempts to justify the iniquities of the Inquisition are catholic and illogical. Indeed, one of the most irritating features of this biography for the critical reader is its author's tendency to judge events through the eyes of the Church.

Nothing could be more incongruous or unkind than the chocolate box cover in which Messrs. Eyre and Spottiswoode have thought fit to entomb poor Madame De Staël. She was romantic, it is true, but she would have been the first to ridicule the Hollywood variety for which this cover seems to prepare us. Mr. Wilson endeavours to show that she was a political and social force of the first magnitude, but curiously enough lays no stress on her literary ability—except in so far as it annoyed Napoleon or kept the exile from her beloved Paris. Her heart was very susceptible (Napoleon rudely referred to her as a whore and an ugly one at that), and her *affaires* are religiously recorded and commented on. The real importance of Madame De Staël, which Mr. Wilson in his efforts to make her "human" has overlooked, lies not in her political persecution, or her liberal *salons*, or her many lovers, but in the effect she had, through her essays, on contemporary literature. It would not be going too far to say that she sponsored the Romantic Movement on the Continent, The book is readable and moderately entertaining, but is grossly overstocked with superfluous and badly translated letters.

Necker's daughter saw in herself the Woman and in Napoleon the Man of the century; but, alas, the Man interested himself not at all in the Woman unless it was to sign an order for her removal to Coppet, or for the destruction of her works. When *De l'Allemagne* was published he instructed Fouché to send the insulting message: "*Votre dernier ouvrage n'est pas français.*" Herr Kircheisen is the author of a monumental work on Napoleon in nine volumes and five thousand pages; and the book reviewed here is an abridgment (720 pages) of his *Napoleon I. Sein Leben Und Seine Zeit.* It has been distilled from the larger work; but the reader, so scrupulously have author and translator done their work, will not be aware of this. Herr Kircheisen, with native patience, concerns himself more particularly with the truth of previous statistical information, and shows that the differences in numbers of the French and Austrians in Napoleon's first Italian campaign were not so large as has been generally held. The Emperor himself is largely to blame for this type of inaccuracy, since he always magnified the strength of the opposition in order to enhance the glory of the inevitable victory. The complex and ever-changing European scene makes a worthy background for the author's hero; and it has been depicted with little fuss and a scholarly assurance which definitely add to the value of the book. The Concordat and the Code Napoleon are, perhaps, dismissed rather too shortly; there is an insistence on numbers which is sometimes wearisome; and the last years on St. Helena are sketchy. But these faults may be in part due to compression, and detract little from the book's authority. Herr Kircheisen is particularly interesting on the Spanish national uprising of the "*dos de Mayo*" (Chap. 16), when for the first time Napoleon was matched with a people, and the seeds of his final downfall were sown. This work will be invaluable to the student and enthralling to the common reader.

Herr Berendsohn's life of Dr. Selma Lagerlöf, the Swedish woman writer, is very small beer. There is a short, a very short, biography; a dim and hesitating preface by Miss Sackville-West, who (on the authority of an American translation) considers her to be a poet writing in prose; and a slightly longer analysis of her works. It is to be regretted that Scandinavian authors have never yet been well served by their English translators. The photographs which illustrate the book are incredibly dull.

Mr. Sharp was the American Ambassador to France during the war. His memoirs are a *pot-pourri* of notes on French politicians, of Paris deserted, barricaded, under fire, of his adventures at the Quai d'Orsay, and of the final entry of the United States into the world conflict. They will be of interest to his contemporaries, and in a lesser degree to historians of the period; but one is far from accepting Joffre's pronunciamento that "this book will be read with passionate ardour by all the readers of the civilised world."

Mr. Bodley was educated at Eton, and from the long, long list of names encountered in his book we may infer that he has met everyone who is anyone. These names are sometimes qualified by such undistinguished epithets as "the lovely Mrs. ——" or "that most beautiful woman, Mrs. ——," and the persistent reader will find it recorded that Eton officers are good fellows. This may be true—but it is scarcely an excuse for writing a book. Perhaps Mr. Bodley feels this himself, since he wonders, in his final chapters, why he is not a successful writer. The real reason may be that he has nothing to write about, and therefore his only indiscretion is in committing that fact to paper.

RICHARD STRACHEY.

MYSTICISM AND NATURE

The Natural and the Supernatural. By JOHN OMAN. Cambridge University Press. 18s.

The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle. By ALBERT SCHWEITZER. Translated by WILLIAM MONTGOMERY. Black. 21s.

As is evident from their titles, the two books here surveyed in company are by no means of identical compass. Their chief point of contact, and also of divergence, is the concept of "mysticism." However that term be defined, it does at least imply a contrast between the temporal and the eternal, between the world of everyday experience and a transcendent reality to be apprehended neither by the light of the eye nor by the dispassionate inferences of science. Mr. Oman arrives at the questions thus involved through a general examination of religion. The initial feeling associated by Otto with "the holy" and "the numinous" leads on to the judgment or valuation which declares objects and places to be "sacred," while the affirmation of the "supernatural" is a further step towards intuition of an objective environment no more dependent for its existence on human recognition than the "natural" as posited by physical science. All religion thus redeems and emancipates, for all discerning of the supernatural reveals something "more abiding and more in accord with human purpose than the constant stream of change." The consequent theoretical difficulties Mr. Oman does not shirk, nor does he feel constrained to imitate Kant's perplexing attempt to make man a member of two incompatible worlds.

In the end, and after careful examination of many types of religion, Mr. Oman would establish an antithesis of "apocalyptic" and "mystical," according as the natural is found to contain a revelation of the supernatural or merely to present a veil of illusion which must be pierced and then finally left behind. Mysticism—or what he denotes by that name—evidently does not appeal to him. It gives emotional glow, he thinks, rather than mental illumination and certainly does not provide a distinct mode of knowledge. Its goal, if not pantheism, is sheer negation, in which the aspiring soul lapses into nothingness instead of achieving the vision of God.

Here it is that Schweitzer differs. "We are always in presence of mysticism," he says, "when we find a human being looking upon the division between earthly and super-earthly, temporal and eternal, as transcended, and feeling himself, while still externally amid the earthly and temporal, to belong to the super-earthly and eternal." Starting from this basis, Schweitzer is far from opposing the apocalyptic to the mystical. On the contrary, his entire book is an attempt to explain the life, doctrine and mysticism of St. Paul in terms of an apocalyptic expectation of the Messianic kingdom. And though it is possible to exaggerate this mode of interpretation, no one will follow the learned and scholarly argument without instruction and profit. The broad result is that Schweitzer makes an almost absolute separation between the apocalyptic and the Hellenistic worlds of thought, placing the Pauline religion entirely in the former, and bidding us flatly contrast two notions easily confounded, the "rebirth" of Greek philosophies or mystery-religions and the "resurrection" preached in the Epistles as a life already begun upon earth. How far this is a true account of the matter has been, and will be, much disputed by experts; but where, on more general grounds, we may take leave to dissent from Schweitzer

1

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is when he exhorts modern Christendom to cast off the Hellenic tradition and return to the simplicity of a faith not yet modified even by the Fourth Gospel. "All things to all men," said the Apostle himself, and surely the universalism by which alone the Pagan world could be mastered would have been impossible, had not the Logos been translated from Hellenic into Christian guise. The seed had to grow and flourish in every soil, on the borders of Plato's Republic no less than within the Messianic kingdom, as transformed by the Christian Jew.

About Motoring

WHERE INVENTION LAGS

I HAVE written many appreciations of existing motor cars, both British and foreign. To-day for a change I propose to underline some of the directions in which the motor industry fails to satisfy its innumerable clients with absolute completeness. First and foremost, I have been astonished during the last week at the strength of our reluctance to use imported fuels. During December Sir Eric Hambro released to the press his hopes that Signor Salerni had solved the intricate technical problems of producing cheap, high-grade motor spirit from foreign coal. Sir Eric is at present busily investigating the possibilities of constructing and installing the necessary plant; and it is obvious that he personally feels quite sanguine about ultimate success, and is risking a large sum in the enterprise. No doubt the financial emergency, the present state of the coal trade, and the "Buy British" campaign have temporarily accentuated the strength of owners' desire to run their cars on home fuel. In the past both France and Germany spent a great deal of money unsuccessfully in the endeavour to produce an alcohol fuel, hoping to reduce or terminate their imports of American and Russian spirit. If the Salerni process restores prosperity to some of our coalfields, the average private owner will quite evidently be overjoyed.

One of the private owner's deepest distastes is a punctured tyre. It entails no long delay, for he can fit a spare wheel within fifteen minutes; but the job is repulsive. Tolerable on dry roads in fair weather, the insertion of a small screwjack under some inaccessible point of an axle, destitute of proper holts for the jack, becomes an abominable business on a cold, wet night; and is really very difficult by dark unless a hand torch is available. Inventors have long since designed permanent telescopic jacks, fitted to chassis and operable from a control on the running boards, which eliminate stooping, or crawling under the car. Some such system should be standardised on every car costing £250 or more. If the operator wears a pair of old gloves, such a system permits a tyre to be changed without soiling hands or clothing.

It is high time that provision was made for starting up a standard engine in cold weather without flooding the cylinders with wet petrol; and for warming up the engine rapidly. Shutters controlled by an automatic thermostat, coupled with electric heating of the carburettor, can solve both problems. As yet only the most expensive cars are properly equipped in either respect.

It is high time that every standard car was equipped for driving in fog. I do not know any standard British car to which a doctor would not make considerable additions and modifications, if his practice covered roads which are normally foggy in winter.

It is high time that coachbuilders invented better door latches. Some of the ultra-modern bodies, which are widely advertised in the press, are amongst the very worst offenders in this respect. Twenty years ago I owned a car with doors which behaved quite well, so long as their posts remained immovable. When the chassis flexed, and the doorways gaped a little, the doors needed refitting, and again functioned properly. My 1931 car has doors which possess double latches of a peculiar character; it takes a very special slam of precisely the correct force to engage both latches simultaneously. Nor has any ingenuity so far availed to sidestep their eccentricities; I still have to shut my own door twice, as often as not; and I always have to dismount to shut the other doors, as my passengers either slam too lightly, and engage one latch only; or slam too hard and make the latch bounce.

It is high time that the interior of cars was furnished with some form of heating, controlled by the driver. We younger

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(*Three well-known Tobaccos are quoted in the original letter, which can be inspected.)

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motorists are perfectly prepared to brave the worst extremities of a British winter in open cars; and a saloon provides all the protection which we ever need. But the motorcar has long since ceased to be a young man's toy. When well-to-do people of sixty or seventy years old pay £500 for a car, they desire that it should supersede trains, trams, taxis, and motorcoaches in their lives, except on rare occasions. Elderly or invalid people cannot stand an unheated vehicle in midwinter. A motorcar generates a vast deal of heat, of which at least 75 per cent. is wasted. If a portion of this waste heat were harnessed, the interior of a saloon could be kept at any desirable temperature in cold weather.

It is high time that every car was fitted with a reversing lamp, controlled by a dashboard switch. After all, cars have to be parked, or turned round, by night as well as by day. The expenditure of current required whilst reversing the car is trivial; and every car disposes of plenty.

The clerk, typist and stenographer protect those portions of their clothing which face the maximum of wear and tear—their cuffs; a charwoman protects the vulnerable points of her person—her knees. If you ask any insurance broker, why the premiums on motor policies are so high, he will complain of the myriads of petty claims made for damaged wings. The bulk of these wings are bent when their owners are manœuvring in confined spaces—very frequently out of their own sheds or gates. On further inquiry we discover that they cannot see their wings, unless they crane their necks unnaturally. Fenders offer no protection of the front or rear wings except in a head-on bump; and most of the damage is done by lateral grazing. It is high time that these vulnerable corners of the car were protected, if only by a rubber buffer, such as a tubular rubber bead along the edge of the wing.

Every instruction book bids the motorist fill up his accumulator at least once a month with distilled water. His failure to do so explains why the cells become impotent so rapidly. His failure is excused by the fact that the accumulators are almost invariably mounted in a grossly inaccessible position, and that if he faces the labour required to get at them, he cannot test the water level by eye. There is no technical obstacle to simplifying this job.

Most motorcars are frequently—if not daily—utilised for shopping purposes. Yet they embody no provision for carrying fragile articles. I speak feelingly, because yesterday, whilst travelling alone, I was entrusted with a rare plant in a pot. I had to nurse it precariously between my thighs while I drove; otherwise the pot and the rare plant would have concluded the run as divorcées. Fortunately the husband who is ordered to bring home a dozen newlaid eggs or a pound of grapes can hang a string bag on an inside doorhandle. But a £1,000 car ought to be designed to carry luggage of every conceivable character.

R. E. DAVIDSON.

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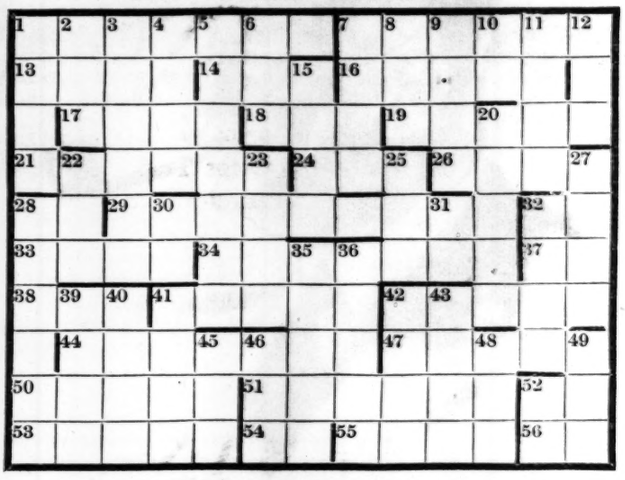

YES, WE HAVE NO RATIONS

(See clues italicised)

ACROSS.

1. *Discouraged in tramcars.*
7. *Of no importance to Knights or Rooks.*
13. When dead she's an ex-pert.
14. To be taken at close range.
16. Sounds like a horrid theatre.
17. Often heard at Twickenham.
18 *rev.* No place so poor as to be without it.
19. *Useful to nigger minstrels.*
21. Was left at Calais.
24. Not carried at the Coronation.
26. Humanitarian hunt.
28. Combines democracy with mathematics.
29. My light is derisory.
32. *Takes place in a siphon.*
33 *rev.* I might follow twenty of these clues.
34. I'll see you don't move too fast.
37. Product of Malaya.
38. It's a mouldy sort of hill, looking backwards.
41. *Involved in Becket's murder.*
42. *You can't reduce fractions to this.*
44. Wales does her bit for humanity.
47. *Frowned upon by the Home Office.*
50. *Useful faculty in crossword solving.*
51 *rev.* I've lost the tip of my wing.
52. *We heard a lot about it in the war.*
53 *rev. Essential to longevity.*
54. Procreative before 52 *ac. rev.*
55. *Preventive of disease.*
56. *A turning round.*

DOWN.

1. *Not the outlet it once was.*
2. *rev.* Attach.
3. Spirit not dealt with by the Licensing Commission.
4. *Followed Becket's murder.*
5. Not an ode.
6. *Volumetric analysis.*
7. *Familiar in a pugilist's eye.*
8. Numbers of numbers.
9. Thine exceeds mine, said Sidney.
10. If Spades are trumps, turn us up.
11 *rev.* Beloved by Marie Antoinette.
12. Just a bit of the machine.
15 *rev.* Not what it seems.
20 *rev.* And unbending.
22. This is a French year.
23 *rev.* Hardly describes our post-war world.
25. Inclination in the sea.
27. *Ours is a hungry one.*
28. 99% *of genius.*
30. Conjunctival gold.
31. This year Man may say it.
32. 1% *of genius.*
35. Reverse at Twickenham after scoring more than once.
36 *rev.* Apparition.
39 *rev. Gladstonian.*
40. Produced by violet rays and bootmakers.
41. Often before one's weird.
42. This gent is industrious anyway.
43 *rev.* Vegetable or mineral?
45. Praenomen wrecked in Cornwall.
46 *rev.* Such stuff as films are made of.
48. Meet me in the bathroom.
49. Protagonist of "uplift."
52. Take nothing from Cerberus.

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS.—1. elephantine. 12. dr(ei). 14. rat. 15. aorist. 16. 'orse *rev.* 17. ores. 18. Sicily (Longfellow). 20. 'tis. 21. skittles. 23. agile. 25. os(i)er. 26. pines. 29. amle (male). 31. Spey. 33. Andrew (wander). 34. awn. 36. scout. 37. squirted. 42. (p)erso(n). 43. caut(ious). 44. noes. 45. sero. 47. ani(mated). 48. reseda *rev.* (mignonette). 49. tinkle. 50. tho (hot). 51. sore.

DOWN.—1. Eros. 2. larkspur. 3. été. 4. pastrycook. 5. (g)host. 6. lira *rev.* 7. Nice. 8. resist *rev.* 9. it (two meanings). 10. Ney (yen). 11. estimates. 12. drill. 13. rose. 19. lase (sale). 22. ie. 24. wag *rev.* 26. Pascal. 27. insane. 28. N.D. 30. endure. 32. eosrn (Norse). 35. resew *rev.* 36. test. 38. quit(e). 39. Utah (Brigham Young). 40. Indo. 41. roes. 46. (dr)ei.

THIS WEEK'S PUZZLE

Popoff was murdered in the train between Badminster and Clew. The train left Badminster at 10 a.m., arrived Clew 10.55 a.m., left Clew 11 a.m., and reached Drayton 11.20 a.m.

It is 40 miles from Badminster to Clew; 10 from Clew to Drayton; and the line is a perfectly straight one.

Hopkins and Watt are implicated.

Hopkins lives at Alehouse, 50 miles (in a straight line) from Badminster and 32 (in a straight line) from Drayton. He left Alehouse on his bicycle at 5.10 a.m. and returned on his bicycle at 2 p.m.

Watt lives at Clew. His car was in the garage until 8.10 a.m. at least, was seen outside the garage at 9.40 a.m., and was back there by 11.35 a.m.

Watt left the train at Drayton, and was seen in Clew at 12.30 p.m.

The maximum speed of the car is 60 m.p.h.: of the bicycle 10 m.p.h.

What were the movements of Hopkins and Watt, and who murdered Popoff?

LAST WEEK'S PUZZLE

The diners were seated as follows: Brown, Miss Jones, Mrs. Brown, Robinson, Smith, Mrs. Robinson, Jones, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Jones. As one solver remarks, it was *not* a well-arranged table! CALIBAN.

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THE WEEK IN THE CITY

By TOREADOR

BULLISH MARKETS AND THE CRISIS—THE "BIG FIVE" BANKS AND THEIR PROFITS—THE EXAMPLE OF TURNER AND NEWALL.

THE serious student of affairs may have been puzzled by the strange behaviour of the stock markets this week. A first-rate political crisis is blowing up on the Continent; yet international securities have been rising and the gilt-edged market has been strong. The causes of the paradox are various. As regards the gilt-edged market, the weakening of discount rates and the buying of Treasury bills down to 5 1/16 per cent. provoked some talk of a reduction in Bank rate. This may be premature but the pound sterling is showing some recuperative power, and it is not expected that France will single it out for attack just to influence our policy at the forthcoming Reparations Conference. (Now that we are "off" gold, the old monetary tactics of France have lost their power.) Another market factor was the false report that Germany had repudiated reparations, for repudiation is just what the stock markets want. New York has actually become bullish. President Hoover's new plan for inflation, which I described last week, has been passed and has caught hold of market imagination. America appears to be determined to recover independently of the mad world outside. A European default would be the last convincing proof that America must inflate on her own or "bust." But it is idle to pretend that a crisis does not exist on the Continent which may yet have serious repercussions in London and New York. The Bank for International Settlements has renewed for three months its share of the $100,000,000 credit to the Reichsbank (expiring on February 4th) provided that the other central banks participating in the credit do the same. If France means to use her financial power for political ends, she will refuse to renew her share of the credit unless Germany falls into line at the Reparations Conference. The serious part is that the bankers' "standstill" agreement for German short-term banking credits is made dependent on the renewal of the central banks' credit. If the latter is not renewed, the "standstill" agreement automatically lapses. In that case, certain American and British acceptance houses will have to face the music.

* * *

The preliminary figures of the 1931 profits of the "big five" joint-stock banks have been hailed in the press with a chorus of praise. Once again the soundness and strength of British banking have been demonstrated—and so on *ad lib.* As a form of national advertisement this is excellent. For the foreign tourist no better slogan could be invented than: "Come to Britain and bank your savings safely." So many people have to put their savings in a safe-deposit box, being fearful of bank failures. Final judgment on the profits of the "big five" banks must be reserved until the balance sheets are published but a few cautionary remarks may not be out of place. A bank's profits in any one year are what the directors like to make them. If the directors desire to show a Socialist opposition that the joint-stock banks are in no need of State control because they run their business efficiently, they can show good results. If, on the other hand, the directors were anxious to convince a Socialist Government in power that banking profits were fickle and that the State would lose money if it meddled in such a speculative enterprise, they might show bad results. It is all a question of accounting procedure. Realised profits and losses on investments go into a bank's trading account. Unrealised investment profits are generally ignored but unrealised investment losses are normally charged against profits in the trading account. If the normal practice had been followed this year the 1931 trading profits of several of the "big five" banks might have vanished. But 1931 was an abnormal year, and investment depreciation has in most cases been charged against reserve.

* * *

I am not suggesting that this is wrong banking practice. If ample reserves have been built up out of profits in previous years to meet abnormal depreciation, it is entirely proper that they should be so utilised when abnormal depreciation comes. The Westminster, for example, disclosed net profits of £1,601,822: at the same time it appropriated £1,820,151 from reserve to meet depreciation on its British Government securities. The National Provincial took £1,479,416 from reserve for the same purpose: its net profits were £1,747,007. Lloyds similarly applied £2,500,000 from reserve: its net profits were £1,926,904. The Midland took £2,748,012 from reserve to meet similar depreciation and provide for "future contingencies": its net profits were £2,056,986. Barclays are silent on the point of investment depreciation but with net profits of £1,794,825, a decline of only £26,382 as compared with 1930, it is presumed that the same accounting practice has been followed. Clearly, if the bank directors had chosen to charge current depreciation against current profits, no profits would have been shown. Further, although provision has been made out of trading profits for "bad and doubtful debts" it may be presumed, from the inconsiderable size of the charge, that no provision has been made for bad and doubtful German credits covered by the "standstill" agreement. If Germany owes London banks on "short-term" about £55 millions, the German commitments of the "big five" joint-stock banks must be pretty large. These criticisms, without detracting in any way from the unblemished reputation which the "big five" deservedly enjoy as "safe" deposit banks, may nevertheless suggest caution to the investor. If bank shares are to be recommended as sound dividend-payers, it is well for the investor to be under no illusion about their 1931 earning powers. The table which follows shows the decline in the net trading profits and the reduction in dividends of the "big five":

	Net Profits. (In Thousand £'s.) 1930.	1931.	% Decline in Profits.	Dividends %. 1930.	1931.
Barclays	£1,821	£1,795	1.4	14	14
Lloyds	2,129	1,927	9.5	15	13½
Midland	2,317	2,057	11.2	18	16
National Provincial ..	1,931	1,747	9.5	18	16
Westminster	1,822	1,602	12.0	20	18

The final table shows the highest and lowest prices of the ordinary shares recorded last year and the dividend yields obtainable at present market prices:

	Share Denomination.	Prices, 1931. High.	Low.	Present Price.	Divs. %.	Div. Yield. %.
Barclays	B £1	58/7½	43/6	52/6	14	5.3
Lloyds	A £5 £1 pd.	64/1½	37/10½	44/6	13½	6.0
Midland	B £1	80/6	61/6	66/–	16	4.5
	£12 £2½ pd.	9 1/32	5 1/32	7	16	5.7
National Provincial	£5 fully pd.	18⅝	13	15½	16	5.2
	£20 £4 pd.	14½	8½	10½	16	6.2
Westminster ..	£4 £1 pd.	81/3	47/6	64/–	18	5.6

The old ladies who religiously hold bank shares as gilt-edged investments may have had some little excitement over the extreme fluctuations in market prices last year.

* * *

In this wicked world of business, where the control of public companies is divorced from the ownership and the law allows investors to be exploited by knavish or secretive directors, it is gratifying to find one or two big companies setting a high standard of directorial duty towards shareholders. Turner and Newall is one. With the 1930-31 report, the directors circulate the complete speech which the chairman intends to deliver to shareholders on January 28th. As directors' reports are always meagre, this is an excellent practice. Better still, the law should compel companies to circulate a verbatim report of the proceedings at general meetings, giving not only the chairman's speech but the questions and answers which follow. Turner and Newall is a holding company and rightly gives a consolidated balance-sheet, showing the true position of the whole group. Yet the Companies Act does not require this elementary duty of a holding company. If any company desires to keep its shareholders in the dark, it has only to turn itself into a holding company and its operating subsidiaries into private companies, and its evil secretiveness receives the sanction of the law. As the chairman of Turner and Newall points out, one company in a vertical combine will sell materials to another at a "profit," and a fictitious profit may thus be shown for the group if these materials are not actually sold to the consumer. I could give many instances of the misinformative accounts of prominent holding companies if space and the law of libel would permit. Turner and Newall have presented a full and frank statement of their affairs and deserve on that account the confidence of the investor. They have maintained a strong financial position—the surplus of floating assets being in excess of £2,000,000—and if they only show earnings of 5½ per cent. to cover dividends of 5 per cent., they have not done badly in a difficult trading year, especially if these earnings are arrived at on a very conservative basis. The ordinary shares at 26s. seem high enough for the present, but are among the best long-term industrial investments.

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